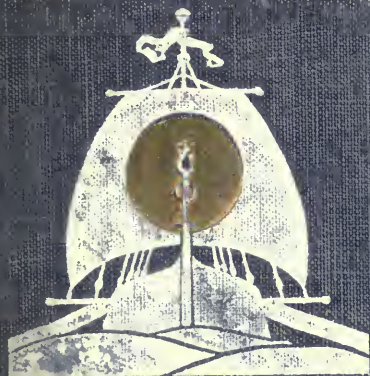


THE NESS KING



C. J. WHITBY.



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To George Granville Leveson-Gower
an Easter offering from
a fellow disciple of the Jesus
Stringer Bateman—
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The Ness King

The Ness King

Ballads Runes and Reveries

By Charles J. Whitby

London :

At the Sign of The Unicorn
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By the same Author:—

The Love Song of Barbara.

The Mermaid's Quest ; and other Poems.

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The Ness King

BOLD Sir Trolle, the Ness King, from his castle in the North
On the thickly wooded headland, oftentimes had sallied forth
With his fierce and lawless fellows, plunder-seeking far and near.
On the earth and on the ocean he was held in hate and fear.

But a mighty man was Trolle, tall, and great of girth and limb ;
And four warriors were counted but a meagre match for him.
On the wooded heights of Trelde, like an eagle on her nest,
He abode throughout the winter, daring all men to molest.

Once, on Yule-tide eve, Sir Borre, smarting under many a wrong,
Called a council of his neighbours, as it were to feast and song ;
Whilst they sate revolving vengeance, with a rush and with a shout,
Trolle's men burst in upon them, and the lights were trampled out.

All unarmed and unprepared, ignominiously they fared ;
Five good knights were trapped and taken, Trolle's dungeon-keep
they shared.

And, among the rest, the sire of the valiant young esquire
Known to love and fame as Ebbe, languished there in shame and
ire.

Ebbe too, himself, had ruth from that Yule-tide eve, in truth,
In that penury bereaved him of the gaiety of youth.
Half the wealth of Nebbe-gord fattened then the robber's hoard,
And the very soil was leaner for the ransom of its lord.

Years had come and gone, and Trolle, from his castle in the North,
Saw his son, Sir Olaf, ride in the dewy morning forth,
With his henchmen proudly armed, and in festal garments gay,
To the bride show that Sir Borre held at Egeskov that day.

Sir Olaf rides from Trelde on a steed of blood and fire,
But Ebbe rides from Nebbe on the war-horse of his sire,
On the lean and broken war-horse of his father dead and gone,
Who had left him poor and friendless in his castle bleak and lone.

Now to Egeskov they come, and the warder blows his horn;
Sir Olaf, meeting Ebbe, smiles in mockery and scorn.
But Ebbe stands aside for the buccaneers to ride
Through the castle gates before him, and he recks not of their
pride.

“ Now welcome ! ” cried Sir Borre, “ friends, I welcome one and all.
Good venison and ale shall be served you in the hall.
To your seats, and take your fill ! for the jousts and games begin,
And the victor’s brow a wreath from fair Mette’s hand shall win.”

“ Nay,” said Olaf, riding on, “ there is time to feast anon,
When the tilt and joust are over, and the chaplet has been won !
This, at most, I may concede,” and he reined his fiery steed,
“ I will pledge thee, ere the contest, in a cup of sparkling mead.”

So a cup was quickly brought, and he drained it to his host,
And his henchmen, one and all, gladly joined him in the toast ;
And Ebbe, too, must stay, misliking that delay,
For he burned with love of Mette, and was thirsting for the fray.

Ah! the dames were eager-eyed when they saw Sir Olaf ride
To his station in the meadow in his panoply of pride;
But Ebbe looked forlorn, in his mantle patched and worn,
On his lean and jaded charger, and they turned from him in scorn.

Yet Ebbe was the guest who in skill outshone the rest,
For he bore three rings away, and his rivals one at best,
But misfortune marred his plan, for Sir Olaf of his man
Received a second charger ere the tilting match began.

Now Ebbe's weary steed was in evil case, indeed,
Whence Olaf overthrew him, and by wealth got valour's meed.
Nathless, none other blow save Olaf's laid him low,
And fair Mette marked his prowess, and remembered it, I trow.

Many guests abode that night in Sir Borre's fair domain,
And among them Ebbe stayed, and Sir Olaf with his train.
There was feasting, and, anon, in a large and lofty hall
Gifts were laid at Mette's feet by her suitors one and all.

There were fabrics rich and rare, jewelled weapons for her hair,
Chains and charms, and figured brooches, pendants, rings, and
girdles fair:

All and each were passing fine, but Sir Olaf's gems did shine
With the most enchanting hues in the splndidest design.

Loud their cries of admiration, whence, more confident and bold,
Turning to her sire, he proffers two fair castles carved in gold.
"Say, Sir Knight, wilt thou surrender this, thy daughter, to my
care,
Castles twain in pomp and splendour like to these henceforth to
share?"

Next, the mark of covert jeers, and proud Olaf's open sneers,
Pressing through the throng of suitors, Ebbe, last of all, appears.
First his good sword sheath and blade lowly at her feet he laid,
Then arose and stood before her in his garments patched and
frayed.

"May it please thee to receive this poor token that I give?
'Tis the best I have to offer who for thee would die or live."
But Sir Olaf, mocking, cried, "With this token at thy side,
I this day did overthrow thee when against me thou didst ride!"

"That my worn-out charger fell shames not me, thou knowest well.
Meet me but afoot, I pledge me soon thy braggart mien to quell!
May my fortune merely prove in this tournament of love
What my merits matched with thine in valour, skill, and might,
behave!"

Thus cried Ebbe, and so fiercely frowned the rivals each on each,
Scarcely might the cool bystanders intercept their burning speech;
But at last they all agreed that another month should speed
Ere by choice of one love-token Mette's troth were pledged indeed.

Proudly on the morrow morn, when the huntsman blew his horn,
To the greenwood fared they forth, on their gallant coursers borne,
Knights, esquires, and ladies fair, in the pastime fain to share,
Olaf, Ebbe, lovely Mette, to the forest did repair.

But Ebbe, though full fain with the rest to ride amain,
Urged not his panting steed, but in pity soon drew rein,
With a pensive, downcast face, fared he on at slackened pace,
While distant, and more distant, rang the music of the chase.

So the morning wore away and approached the bright mid-day,
When Ebbe turned aside down a leafy woodland way,

There was heard the light refrain of a clinking bit and chain,
And fair Mette rode towards him, unattended by her train.

"Wherefore," said she, drawing near, "dost thou, Ebbe, linger
here,

While so hotly all thy fellows are pursuing the red deer?"

Then she turned and rode beside him, glancing shyly at his face,

"I myself," she said, "am weary of the rigour of the chase."

"This good servant, true and tried, which my sire was wont to ride,
Never more by me," quoth Ebbe, "shall with whip and spur be
plied,

Be my fortune what it may, in the hunt or in the fray."

"Bravely spoken!" answered Mette: "Grant me now a boon, I
pray:

"Take this horse, and give me thine; so shall worth and valour
shine

Unabashed by pomp and show, arms and armour superfine!"

"Nay," said he, "this horse would be all unmeet to carry thee;
Neither may I sell or barter one so near and dear to me."

"How, then, shall I now believe those thy words of yester-eve—

'This, the best I have to offer, may it please thee to receive?'"

So she answered, rosy-red; not another word she said,

But upon the instant left him, nor so much as turned her head.

Sadly Ebbe watched her go, heaved a sigh, and turning back
Over trampled moss and fern, steadfastly retraced his track,
Through the forest deep and dim, to Sir Borre's castle-gate,
Musing still upon her beauty, grieving at his luckless fate.

That same night the suitors feasted in Sir Borre's hall once more ;
But at daybreak they departed till the month of grace was o'er,
Riding forth by twos and threes through the portals proud and
stern,

While the maiden, from above, bowed farewell to each in turn.

But when, last of all appearing, hoping much, but doubting,
fearing,

Ebbe turned, her mild complaisance on the instant disappearing,
Coldly frowned she, and withdrew her, as from some too bold
pursuer,

From the penitential glances of her disconcerted wooer.

On the margin of the forest, twenty furlongs from the keep,
Guarded by a faithful herdsman, grazed a goodly flock of sheep,
Here it was that Ebbe halted, greeting thus the shepherd :

“ Friend,

To thy lord's entrancing daughter, Ebbe's fealty commend.

“ Say that, an I would not chaffer this brave beast for gold or gain,
Freely pledged to Mette's beauty, thou thyself didst see him slain ! ”
To his master's touch responding, bowed the steed to his embrace,
Then the cold steel plunged relentless, and the life-blood gushed
apace.

Sadly on afoot fared Ebbe to his lone and cheerless hall ;
Seven days and nights he sorrowed, but the eighth day mended all,
When a grand and glossy charger, worthy of a warrior's weight,
Was at dewy dawn discovered tethered to his castle gate.

Splendidly equipped, he stood there proudly pawing at the ground,
And in quaint and gorgeous letters these wise words of eld were
found

On his crimson rein embroidered: "*Frankest feud finds fit-
test ende*:"

"Aye, in verity," cried Ebbe, "be it foeman, be it friend!"

Bold Sir Trolle, the Ness King, from his Castle in the North,
Ere the month of grace is over, at the set of sun rides forth;
And Sir Borre, with his quarry, riding homeward from the chase,
On the skirts of his dominion meets the rover face to face.

"Ho! Sir Knight," the Viking cries, feigning anger and surprise,
"Huntest thou so near my castle? He who robs my thickets
dies!"

"Nay!" said Borre, undismayed, "mine this forest, mine this glade!
He who here confronts my pastime needs must question blade with
blade."

Trolle laughed: "Hast thou forgotten what befell thy friends and
thee

On that Yule-tide eve, good Borre? Woe to him who angers me!
If the land be in thy lordship, yet this greenwood borders mine;
And it skills not that my larder should go bare to furnish thine.

"But since Olaf—so they tell me—finds thy daughter passing fair,
For the nonce I brook thy trespass; but, by all the Gods, beware!"
Straight he wheeled his horse, and vanished ere the knight per-
ceived his bent,

Deaf to Borre's fierce defiance, which pursued him as he went.

So the days and weeks wore on, till the month of grace was gone,
And the suitors reassembled in Sir Borre's hall anon.
There the kind or luckless fate of their wooing to await,
And the pangs of love and longing at their source to renovate.

Like the gifts before them ranged on the tables there, unchanged,
Each would proffer his allegiance, unaccepted, unestranged.
So they laugh and talk aside till the doors are opened wide,
And, amidst her maidens, Mette meets their glances eager-eyed.

Lithe she looked, and passing fair, as she stood before them there,
With her lovely face illumined by her eyes and by her hair,
In her gown of emerald hue, flower-embroidered through and
through,
And her gemmy golden girdle, shrinking not beneath their view.

Whilst a scribe could reckon ten, breathless was the stillness then,
All were spell-bound by her beauty—wives and virgins, youths and
men—

Down the lofty hall she glanced, then, with glowing cheeks
advanced

Whither, by his weapon seated, Ebbe watched like one entranced.

Look! beside him now she stands, and the sword is in her hands.
Lo, the graven hilt she kisses. Love she lacks, not gold or lands!
And at last her voice is heard, sweeter than a fluting bird;
Ebbe's heart with nameless rapture leaps again at every word:

“By this token I attest that thy gift was goodliest;
Thou didst proffer me thy manhood, toys and trinkets all the rest.
Take me, then, to be thy bride; let me never leave thy side;
Hearts that beat through life together, death itself shall scarce
divide.”

So she spake; and blind with bliss, Ebbe stooped her hands to
kiss;

Then they turned and faced the others; lovely was their mien, I
wis.

But Sir Borre then was heard : " Since thy choice thou hast averred,
Now, before these guests and neighbours, I, myself, would speak
one word.

" When we last foregathered here, Ebbe's hap with sword and spear,
In the chase and in the tourney, less than Olaf's did appear.
So, to-morrow, as before, he shall hunt with us once more ;
Then may luck befriend thy lover, and his name to fame restore ! "

Mindful of his doughty steed, blithely Ebbe cried, " Agreed !
Gladly will I do thy bidding, for thy words are just, indeed.
So, to-morrow, for the chase, and, thereafter, face to face,
I will brook thy vengeance, Olaf, scion of a lawless race ! "

" Nay," cried Olaf, " thou shalt wed some pale ghost among the
dead,
For my sword shall pierce thy vitals ere three days and nights be
sped ;
And this maiden, who, forsooth ! flouts me for a beggared youth,
Shall despise thee in thy downfall, and remember me with ruth."

Ebbe laughed : " Brave words be these ! for the nonce I take mine
ease,
Swill thy soul with proud presumption, thou shalt drain the bitter
lees ! "
Thus he spake, and turned aside to his lovely destined bride
Like a man whose word is uttered, and whose purpose will abide.

Merrily, upon the morrow, to the hunt they sallied out,
And all day the woods re-echoed with full many a lusty shout ;
Many a grisly forest ranger, many an antlered stag was slain.
Ere, at sundown, they assembled in Sir Borre's hall again.

Next the slaughtered game was counted in the presence of their
host,

And, by chance or skill, Sir Olaf, as before, had slain the most.
But young Ebbe still was absent when the plunder was displayed;
And, since noontide, none had spied him, or knew wherefore he
delayed.

Olaf smiled—and Mette waited in an agony of doubt,
But at last the warder's bugle sounded cheerily without;
And anon her lover entered, calm and confident of mien,
But no furred or feathered victims of his prowess might be seen.

Olaf mocked him: "Thou art late! thy good pleasure we await;
Fain would we behold thy booty: prithee, now, our pangs abate!"
"Little," said he, "have I got; and Sir Borre, well I wot,
Scarce had blamed me had I left it lying in the woods to rot."

Borre flushed an angry red: "Deeds, not idle talk!" he said.
Straightway from beneath his mantle Ebbe drew a ghastly head,
Swiftly, suddenly withdrew it, and upon the table threw it:
"Knowest thou that head, Sir Olaf?" Olaf trembled; well he
knew it!

Knew those features, dark, distorted, which the blood-stained
board supported.

"Haste thee, Olaf; seek the carcase!" Ebbe mockingly exhorted.
"Lo! the wolves and vultures tear it! Back to wooded Trelde
bear it.

Then return and wreak thy vengeance, for I slew thy sire, I swear
it!"

Yes, that mighty man of dread, Trolle, the Ness King, was dead;
While the guests, with awe and wonder, gazed on his gigantic head,
Borre, clasping Ebbe's hand, cried: "This deed of thine was grand.
From a rude and lawless ruffian thou hast freed thy native land!"

“Poor and fatherless art thou: I will be thy father now,
Yea, for thou shalt wed my daughter, since her love she doth
avow.”

Thus he spake, and Ebbe's name thundered rèsponse, while each
flame

Of the lurid torchlight shuddered in the tumult of acclaim.

But proud Olaf and his men, passing forth in silence, then,
Homeward through the dismal forest skulked like foxes to their
den.

To the heights of Trelde they bade farewell at break of day,
Fearful of pursuit and vengeance, manned their ships and sailed
away.

Samson the Black

Rodgeier . . . King of Salern.
Hildeswid . . . His Daughter.
Brunstein . . . His Brother.
Samson . . . Called the Black. A Warrior.
Samson's Mother . . . A Miserly Old Woman.
A Herald.

Chorus of Warriors, Maidens, Citizens.

SCENE I.—SALERN. THE PALACE.

RODGEIER.

NOW feast we, Lords, let every heart rejoice,
Drink deeply : be your laughter unrestrained !
Ye minstrels, too, acclaim with harp and voice
The glorious battle we this day have gained.

CHORUS.

A glorious battle we this day have gained !

SAMSON.

A boon, Sir King, a boon !

RODGEIER.

What may it be?

Thou scarce canst fail—so much we owe to thee!

CHORUS.

Hail, mighty Warrior, foremost in the fight,

Before thee many a valiant foe went down!

Whole troops, at thy approach, were put to flight,

Hail, mighty Warrior—worthiest of renown!

RODGEIER.

Whose valour is like Samson's, or whose might?

SAMSON.

Not much in Lands or Castles I delight,

And I am rich already; but, grown old,

My mother, peevish dame, will prate and scold.

Wherefore I crave—let me not be denied—

Thy daughter Hildeswid—make her my Bride!

RODGEIER.

(What madness—he my daughter to demand!

Almost I dropped the wine-cup from my hand!)

Samson, we prize thy valour and thy worth,

And yet, our daughter is of royal birth.

Bethink thee! she must wed a King, not thee;

A subject, thou, to her, even as to me.

Take now this plate of sweetmeats to her bower,

And straight returning thence, my honoured guest,

Here in a bowl of wine one jovial hour

Shall drown all memory of thy strange request.

SAMSON.

I take the sweetmeats, and I go
Without a word;
And shall I brook denial? No!
My wrath is stirred.
Ah, Hildeswid! How sweet thou art,
Amongst thy maids! Be still, my heart!

HILDESWID.

Threads of purple, threads of gold,
Threads of silver fine,
In and out, and fold by fold,
Weave a fair design.
Loving labour, patient skill,
So it is we work our will!

SAMSON.

Lovely blossom, damsel sweet,
Lo, I bring thee dainties meet!
Maidens joy in manhood's might,
Men in maidens' charms,
Rise and come with me: this night
Gives thee to my arms.

HILDESWID.

Samson the Black! This night! it cannot be!
How strong he looks, how gentle was his voice!
Coal-black his beard, and hair, and eyes! Ah me!
To think that Hildeswid should be his choice!

SAMSON.

Why this delay? Come, or I slay thy sire,
And burn this palace and all its guests with fire.

HILDESWID.

Ah, Samson, look not so !

I tremble—I will go !

SAMSON.

She takes my hand : she follows me :

The courtyard soon we gain.

And here my charger waits, I see,

With bridle and with rein.

Ah, how the varlets turn to stare !

But none to check my course will dare.

Ho, for the saddle ! Come, sweetheart !

She sits before me now !

I spur my charger, we depart !

Ho, for the greenwood bough !

SCENE II.

SAMSON'S MOTHER.

What stranger knocks and thunders at my door ?

I cannot house ye : I am old and poor.

SAMSON.

No, stranger, mother. Open ! 'tis your son.

Withdraw the bolts, abate these foolish fears !

A bride, a King's fair daughter, he has won,

To tend thee, Dame, in thy declining years.

How slow she is ! The hinges creak and groan ;

Methinks my mother lives too much alone.

Open at last ! Ah, mother, what is this ?

I sent you servants, gold and raiments fine ;

In tattered rags you shame our bridal bliss ;

No warmth, no light, no comfort I divine.

MOTHER.

I drove the guzzling sluts and men away,
The raiments all are stored, and in a chest
The gold is locked against a rainy day.
Who knows when one may need it? But this guest,
This maid, this idle groom—what do they here?
They'll eat me out of house and home, I fear.

SAMSON.

Peace, we are weary! Find us food and drink.
What, naught but bread and water! Well, I think
There still is venison yonder in the wood.
Come, varlet, come—the twilight yet is good.

HILDESVID.

Gone! May he soon return—'tis lonesome here!
Where is his mother? Seek her, damsel dear.
(*Alone*) Ah, how the ghostlike shadows creep
Along the wall!
Dark grows the forest; silence deep
Pervades the hall.
My young limbs tremble, as I wait,
With fear and cold.
How strange and terrible a fate
Here to grow old!
I can bear it no more—down the steep stairs I'll clamber,
How dusty and dreary each room!
Let me open this door! What a huge vaulted chamber!
Ah, who crouches there in the gloom?
'Tis she, 'tis his mother, the miser, the scold,
By a chest she is kneeling and counting her gold,
She sees me, she comes, I am lost, let me fly!

MOTHER.

Thief, robber! I'll strangle thee! Yes, thou shalt die!

SAMSON.

What madness! Away! Would you murder the child?
Unhand her, I say! And so gentle and mild!
Now Mother, 'tis plain you can bide here no more,
To my grange on the edge of the wood, with your store,
I'll take you, and leave you in peace as before.

SCENE III.

SAMSON'S GRANGE ON THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.

MOTHER.

What warriors brave are these, in haste advancing,
With neighing steeds, and armour brightly glancing?

RODGEIER.

Dame, we are seeking Samson, called the Black.
Where dwells he?

MOTHER.

I would serve thee, but alack!
I never heard the name.

RODGEIER.

That cannot be,
Thou liest. Here is gold. Where lurketh he?

MOTHER.

Gold, gold! Ah, how I love it! Sire, I'll tell,
Nay, lead thee; come! 'Tis but in yonder dell!

RODGEIER.

What knight is this who proudly rears
A banneret of gold,
Whereon a lion's form appears
In sable hue enscrolled?
Coal-black his armour and his steed;
It is the foe, 'tis he, indeed!

SAMSON.

King, I defy thee and thy men,
Bid life adieu;
For never shalt thou see again
Day dawn anew.
On, on! look how they reel! Down falls the king!
Well smitten steel! The rest are on the wing.

SCENE IV.

SAMSON.

My mother, my own mother, basely sold
My safety to thy father for his gold;
And in my anger, thirsting for her gore,
Thrice my hand sought my dagger, thrice forbore.
Oh, thou, my bride, my love, my pride,
Be faithful unto me!
If thou, too, dost betray thy trust
Thy life's the penalty!

HILDESVID.

Look not so wild, be kind and mild,
Thine armour I'll unlace,
Thy helm remove in pledge of love,
And kiss thy bearded face.

SAMSON.

Sweetheart, for thee I covet power and fame;
King's daughter, hear me vow.
That I will add new lustre to thy name,
Princes to thee shall bow.
Who would not strive to grace a gem so rare
With fulness of renown?
This golden head of thine one day shall wear
Thy father's golden crown.

SCENE V.

HILDESWID.

What knights are these who seek admittance here?

BRUNSTEIN.

Fair niece, 'tis I, 'tis Brunstein—do not fear!

HILDESWID.

Whence come you, Uncle, with your warrior band?

BRUNSTEIN.

I sought the traitor Samson through the land.

CHORUS.

We sought him over mountain, over plain,
And through the gloomy forest, but in vain!
Last night we reached a fortress grey and strong,
And rested there—our slumber was not long!
Grim Samson came and fired the massive gates
And roused us to confront our fearful fates.

Amidst the raging flames that leapt and glowed,
Now here, now there, his form gigantic showed.
So fearful was the conflict and the din,
It seemed as though a host had broken in.

BRUNSTEIN.

Full many a warrior perished there, and I,
With six companions, could not choose but fly.

HILDESVID.

What wouldst thou, Uncle?

BRUNSTEIN.

Mount and ride with me.
He slew thy Sire, he is no mate for thee.

HILDESVID.

He is my Husband.

BRUNSTEIN.

Yet he slew thy Sire!

HILDESVID.

He loves me, loves me!

BRUNSTEIN.

Nay! 'twas but desire.

HILDESVID.

I cannot leave him—hist! he comes! Away!

CHORUS.

He comes—dread Samson comes! Away, away!

SAMSON.

What, Brunstein and his henchmen! Coward, stay!
I follow, Samson follows, and to slay!

SCENE VI.

FINALE. SALERN.

CHORUS OF CITIZENS.

What Knight is this who proudly rears
A banneret of gold,
Whereon a lion's form appears
In sable hue enscrolled?
Coal-black his armour and his steed,
Samson the Black—'tis he, indeed!
Dietrich the Amelung rides with him,
And leads a countless host.
If we confront these foemen grim,
O townsmen, we are lost!
We'll sally forth and learn their will
Before they come to burn and kill.

HERALD.

Oh, hearken, all ye townsmen of Salern:
Samson the Black and Hildeswid return.
If ye your homes and lives would save to-day,
Attend his bidding, and obey!

CITIZENS.

Speak, Hero, speak! thy bidding we await!

SAMSON.

I come to be Master of your State.
Lo, here, the daughter of your vanquished King,
Fair Hildeswid, your lawful Queen, I bring.
Brunstein, your chosen Monarch, I struck down,
And for myself and her I claim the crown.

CITIZENS.

On to the citadel! We'll vow
Allegiance now.

SAMSON.

Thus, love, do I fulfil the oath I swore,
To win thee back the crown thy Father wore.

CHORUS.

With banners flowing, trumpets blowing,
March we to the Town.
His valour there, her beauty rare,
We'll crown, we'll crown.

Lembek's Will

WHAT happier man than Lembek, as home he rides to-day
To Varde from the thingstead, and singeth all the way?

He thinks of his dear daughters, two damsels lithe and tall,
The golden-haired, the beautiful, beloved by one and all.

He thinks of his kind neighbours, his glebes and meadows wide,
The castle by the river-bank to which he brought his bride.

Dead, she, long since, and buried, his dear and faithful spouse;
But waiting to receive her lord in God the Father's house.

And in those two fair daughters he still beholds her face,
Still solaced by her tenderness, still gladdened by her grace.

His daughters no less wise to boot than débonnaire and gay,
A monk from Tvisel convent comes to teach them day by day.

A righteous and discreet young clerk, well wotting how to blend
Grave counsel with light converse, he, and Lembek's trusted friend.

What happier man than Lembek to-day upon this earth?
What house like his for fellowship and hospitable mirth?

But look! the fortress rises against the darkening sky,
And Lembek spurs his flagging steed, for home, sweet home, is
nigh.

He wins the keep, the drawbridge falls, he rides up to the door;
His daughters? ever they were wont to meet him here before!

What bode these mournful faces of servitor and thrall?
The aged steward silently conducts him to the hall.

"Welcome, dear lord, thrice welcome," his voice is like a groan!
"Thy daughters"—"Sirrah, what of them?" "Dear master, they
are gone!"

"What say'st thou, rascal? Whither gone?" "Alas, lord, for thy
pain!

We sought them high, we sought them low—no tidings could we
gain."

"The monk!" shrieked Lembek, mad with grief: the monk repeats
the tale.

In silence Lembek listens, but his face is deathly pale.

Ah, see! he reels, he sways, he falls—upon the ground he lies!
'Twas long ere on his blasted life he looked with conscious eyes.

He wept, he raved, blaspheming; with laughter wild he spurned
The comfort proffered by the monk: to gall his blood seemed
turned.

His comely face grew haggard, his locks like driven snow,
His grief consumed him, and his gait was tremulous and slow.

All fellowship rejecting, he haunted, like a ghost,
The scenes embittered, yet endeared, by those untimely lost.

Years came and went, he recked not; but cherished his despair;
Rebellious and resentful, his yoke he still would bear.

The monk became an abbot; he ruled the convent now,
And pleaded oft with Lembek to heaven's high will to bow.

One stormy eve, a woman, in garments mean, was brought
To Lembek in the castle, and there a boon besought.

That he with her would visit her husband where he lay
Bed-ridden in his dwelling, to hear what he might say.

“Nay, lord,” she cries, for he denies the boon, and bids her go,
“The man is on his death-bed; this thing thou needs must know!

“Come, lord!” “I come,” said Lembek. She leads him to the
place.

The dying man receives him; they two are face to face.

“Forgive me, Godske Lembek! Remit my tortured soul!
Bribed by a lustful traitor, thy daughters fair I stole.

“At dusk we seized and bound them—a fearful oath I swore
That I would ne’er betray the deed. Ah, must I tell thee more?

“The convent wall received them—so faithful to his trust
Thy friend, the monk—the abbot! So deadly was his lust!

“Not they the only victims!” the dying man spake on,
Strange tales! . . . but death surprised him. The Knight
returned anon.

The secret thus revealed to him he guarded to the end,
And when the Abbot sought him out, received him as a friend.

He said: “Age creeps upon me; ere long I needs must die;
And for my castle and estate no heir-at-law have I.

“To thee, and to thy convent, this wealth of mine shall pass,
If thou and all thy brotherhood will here perform one Mass,

“One Mass for my dead daughters, whom thou didst love so well,
And didst instruct so wisely—to save their souls from hell.”

Now Tvisel convent’s orders in ancient days decreed
Such bribery unlawful—not so the Abbot’s greed!

Upon the day appointed the monks to Varde came,
And there to his bequeathal saw Lembek sign his name.

But first, for his two daughters, and for their souls' repose,
By all the brethren chanted, the sacred Mass arose.

"Now follow me," said Lembek, when they had sung and prayed,
"The treasure I bequeath to you shall duly be displayed."

With eager haste they followed; he led them down alone
Into the vaulted cellar, and raised a huge flag-stone.

Then, peering through the darkness, they saw, beneath, a room,
With blocks of granite paved and walled—a subterranean tomb!

But for two narrow port-holes, no windows there, no door;
One lantern dimly lit the place, a ladder gained the floor.

"Your treasure there awaits you," cried Lembek; "Sirs, descend!"
So, one by one, they enter; last goes the traitor friend.

But scarce the Abbot's footsoles the bottom rung have left,
When rudely through the ceiling the ladder is bereft.

"Now for your Mass take payment, ye lustful dogs of hell!
And for my outraged daughters take ye reward as well!"

Thus Lembek's voice, announcing the thunderbolt of fate.
For mercy vainly pleading, with tears they supplicate.

Obedient to his bidding, with bundles of dry hay
The servants fill the dungeon. Oh, monks, 'tis time to pray!

"A torch, a torch!" cries Lembek: 'Tis done! the awful gloom
Is lit with flames of vengeance—the flag-stone seals their tomb.

Wulfstan's Departure

YOUNG Wulfstan's wild fancy contemned the sweet haven of
home,

The roar of the surf at his feet was a challenge to roam.

He shunned the glad converse of mote-house and ingle to range
At random, immersed in imaginings lawless and strange.

And once, as he wandered at eventide, heard, near at hand,
Loud voices, commingled with laughter; and lo, on the strand,

Their shapes looming darkly against the broad westerly light,
A craft of strange build and her mariners burst into sight.

On rocks they were seated, or prone they reclined on the beach,
Or sauntered in couples, or clambered, each calling to each.

And one, in the midst of them, suddenly facing about,
Spied Wulfstan approaching, and straightway advanced with a
shout.

And, speaking as one to more barbarous accents inured,
"Rash boy," he exclaimed, "by what perilous purpose allured

"Thus darest thou into our doings unbidden to pry?
Art sick of the sun, peradventure—desirous to die?"

"I stumbled upon you," said Wulfstan, "by chance in your lair,
No secrets I coveted, purpose have none to forswear;

"Yet, if ye would slay me, albeit the offence I disown,
Behold where I stand at your mercy, unarmed and alone!"

But Thorwald, computing the depth of the gathering gloom,
Stood musing a moment, and Wulfstan awaited his doom,

Resolved, if the other should feel for his weapon again,
To spring at his throat on the instant and gripe it amain.

The sun was just sinking, and now, as it passed out of sight,
Their faces were fanned by the breath of the oncoming night,

And sombre and vigilant, uttering never a sound,
A group of the stalwart invaders had gathered around.

"Our will to dissemble," said Thorwald, "we rovers disdain,
Our purpose is plunder. Choose, therefore, if thou wilt remain

"In bondage until we return and our booty divide,
Or, freely accepting our fellowship, serve as our guide."

"And think ye," cried Wulfstan, "the meed of such rapine secure?
Brave hearts and strong arms will be ready to greet you, be sure!

"And if in the toils of their justice ye stumble and fall,
Relentless and swift is the doom I predict for you all.

"Renounce, then, your plunderous purpose while yet there is time,
And swear by the seat of the gods to depart without crime,

"Then follow me hence to the hall where my kindred abide,
And freely partake of the wealth to extortion denied."

"Brave words and fine promises, truly!" the chieftain exclaimed;
"But what if we trust them, indeed, and are flouted and shamed!"

“What think ye, my comrades?” “His counsel contents us,” they cried;

“Let him bring us to taste the delights that his kindred provide.”

“So be it!” said Thorwald; “but first let him swear by this blade That he and his folk will abide by the truce that is made;

“And we, in like manner, if welcomed with brotherly cheer, Will reap not among them the harvest of sword and of spear,

“But hie us away to the shadow of headland and ness, The world is our glebe, so what reck we one swath more or less?”

Pledged thus to forbearance, they turned from the glimmering main,

And into the darkness, with Wulfstan, forth sallied the train.

Fair freshened the breeze when the marge of the uplands they won, Above them the clouds drifted slowly and followed the sun.

But they traversed the glades of a pine-forest sombre and drear Ere the moon-crescent rose, and the stars paved the firmament clear.

At length, in the distance, a ruddier gleam they descried; Through casement and portal it shimmered and shone far and wide.

And hastening forward, they came to Earl Siegbert's abode, And into his presence across the broad threshold they strode.

Then hushed was the medley of voices that filled the great hall; Aghast were the women and children, astonished were all.

But Siegbert their peaceful demeanour discerned by degrees.

“Whence comest thou, Wulfstan?” he cried; “and what strangers be these?”

"Freebooters are they, who have sailed from a land over-sea,
But a truce we have sworn, and as guests I commend them to thee."

"So be it!" cried Siegbert, advancing; "I welcome you, friends!
If churls ye have deemed us, we promise to make you amends.

"The term of your sojourn to feasting and revels we vow.
Give place, my companions: the strangers will sup with us now."

So kind was his greeting, so dauntless and noble his mien,
That Thorwald forgot the fierce doubts which too instant had been.

The hand which Earl Siegbert extended he grasped with good-will,
"Gramercy, great chieftain!" he cried, "for thou speakest not ill."

His buckler of bronze he unshouldered, and took from his head
His glittering helmet adorned with wide pinions outspread.

And eke his companions their weapons of warfare laid by,
And turned to the tables, well pleased such good cheer to descry.

For heaped were the dishes with viands well savoured and fine,
And brimmed the great goblets with bumpers of mead and of wine.

So now there was feasting and revelry, laughter and song,
And jovially sped the swift hours of carousal along.

Exploits and adventures heroic were proudly recalled
To a red-hearted semblance of life by the songs of the skald;

And golden-haired maidens, the feast with good-will to adorn,
Stood ready at hand to replenish each beaker and horn.

To the glorious gods of Valhalla great goblets they quafft,
And pledged one another in many a deep-foaming draught.

'Twas late ere they rose from the banquet and moved from the hall;
But Wulfstan, unsated and silent, outlistened them all.

And whilst they were sleeping he wandered forth into the night,
Distracted by turbulent longings, half pain, half delight.

The deeds they had cited enkindled his heart like a flame,
And hot for the highway of life was each nerve of his frame.

At length, in the hush of deep midnight, his chamber he sought,
And whelmed in the vagueness of dreams the tense visions of
thought.

But early and blithe on the morrow young Wulfstan awoke,
And blithely anon in the hall reassembled the folk.

The glorious day was before them, fresh, virginal, bright;
Predestinate wholly to fulness of manful delight.

Ere long they were brushing the dew from the grass in their speed,
As they sought for their pastime an ample and verdurous mead.

Beyond it the river meandered in shimmering pride,
To where on the distant horizon it merged in the tide.

Above them light cloudlets careering impearled the blue sky,
And vigilant whispering elm-trees were stationed anigh.

Here, then, they prepared them with ardour, and here wore away,
In joyous contention, the hours of that long summer day.

With zeal to the contest each moment new rivals advance
To sword-play and horsemanship, leaping, and hurling the lance.

And one heart was beating ere long to wild runes of delight,
For none save young Wulfstan matched Thorwald the rover in might

In skill none surpassed him, but Wulfstan in strength was his peer;
Yea, he, when they came to the marge of the water so clear,

And stripped there to bathe in the light of the sun's crimson gleam,
Seized Thorwald, and held him so long in the depths of the stream

That Thorwald's companions looked each on the other with
dread—

But, see! to the surface each combatant raises his head.

They pant, they emerge: Thorwald laughs, and embraces the
youth.

"Well grappled, by Odin! Brave Wulfstan, I love thee in sooth!

"Wilt thou be a Viking, a hunter of booty and fame?

Wilt ride the sea-horses that only we Vikings can tame?

"We two will swear brotherhood: thou shalt be one of my band.
Such might was not made to be trifled away on dry land."

Thus Thorwald; and Wulfstan with rapture assented. Then all
Turned homeward, and feasted with Siegbert again in his hall.

On the morrow a-hunting far through the deep forest they rode;
Then weapons and cloaks by their bountiful host were bestowed.

The while they all banqueted, sang and caroused as before,
Then slept; but, ere daybreak, arose and repaired to the shore.

Fresh tasted the air of the morning, and salt was the gale
That breasted the incoming rollers, yet could not prevail

To check them, but whitened their summits, as when, with disdain
Of bit and of bridle, a rushing steed tosses his mane.

The grey clouds above them, like Wulfstan, were all outward-
bound,

And the sea-mews were calling, their cries by the breakers half-
drowned.

The ship now is launched, but her pinions as yet are unfurled ;
Yet she tugs at her leashes, would fain be let fly on the world !

“ Farewell ! ” cries Earl Siegbert to Wulfstan, unclasping his hand.
Anon from the bulwarks the youth bids farewell to the land.

Far back, on the eastern horizon, the dawn flushes pale ;
Up, up with the canvas ; the Vikings depart with the gale !

The Ballad of the Blind King's Daughter

WHEN Robert, the Blind King, knew that the might of his age
was broken,

Thus to his daughter dear were the words of his counsel spoken :

“Sweetheart, the night draws near, and the time is at hand for
sleeping ;

Soon from our nerveless grasp shall the sceptre pass to thy keeping.

“Sceptre and crown are thine, and the realm is no great one, truly ;
And yet thou art young, dear heart, and the people may wax unruly.

“Shall we not curb their pride by the might of an absolute master ?
Shall we not make thee a bride, and thy birthright surer and
vaster ?

“Hither the bridegroom sails from his roadstead over the water.
Has not the Great King sued for the hand of the Blind King's
daughter ? ”

Mildred listened and sighed, for her dream had been love, not
glory.

Glad was her sire ere he died, but alas for the queen of my story,

Wedded and crowned ; and alas for the love-bond soon to be
broken,

Vows that her heart denied by the lips of the bride were spoken !

For Love leads Youth to the goal when he walks in his own bright
beauty,

Yet proves but a faithless troll when he masks in the robes of Duty.

Dread was the Great King's mien, proud chiefs at his glance dis-
sembled,

Faltered and cringed, and the queen at the sound of his footsteps
trembled.

Trembled and shrank from his gaze, and would wander apart in
her sadness,

Bidding adieu to the days of her innocent girlhood and gladness.

Slowly the weeks crept by, and as desolate one as another,

Until from a distant land came Bertram, the Great King's brother.

Bertram, the flower of his race, and the champion of all the
afflicted,

Equal in stature and grace to the gods in old story depicted.

Scarce had she looked on the prince ere the heart of Queen
Mildred was captured.

He, at the sight of her charms, and the sound of her voice, was
enraptured.

Soul was awakened by soul, and Love crowned their young lives
with completeness,

Infinite pain was revealed as a well-spring of infinite sweetness.

Oh, to be thine, to be thine! was the lilt of the lay of her being.

And, verily, love, thou art mine! the response in sweet concord
agreeing.

Seldom the twain were apart, and their love by such tokens
appearing,

Rumour was born of a breath, and it came to the Great King's
hearing.

Fires of revengeful resolve in the eyes of the despot glistened,
While, with inscrutable calm, to the tale of the traitor he listened.

Straightway he summoned the prince, and with kind salutation
received him;

Counsel, he said, was to seek, for a question of statecraft grieved
him.

Tidings, to wit, of revolt from his vassaldom over the water.
Who would establish the peace of the realm of the Blind King's
daughter?

"Mine the task!" Bertram exclaimed, and he promised to sail on
the morrow.

Grimly the Great King smiled as he thought of the queen in her
sorrow.

Grimly he smiled eftsoons, when the sails of the squadron vanished
Over the far sea-line, at the thought of the loved one banished.

When darkness covered the land, and the blossoms and birds were
sleeping,

Mildred wandered awhile in the fragrant solitude, weeping.

Deaf to the sigh of the breeze which arose like a whisper of
warning,

Little she weened in her woe of the peril that loomed in the
morning.

When word was brought from the King, and affrighted, newly-
arisen,

Haled by the guard she passed from her chamber forth to the
prison.

There, in a vault-like cell, for a season they left her to languish,
Shut from the light of the sun, and her heart was alone with its
anguish.

Until, when the pride of her name had been tried and ignobly
defeated,

Into the court she came, where the Lords of the Realm were seated.

Throned in the midst was her spouse, and he thundered, "Look to
repentance!

Trampled and spurned were thy vows! Adulteress! this is thy
sentence :—

"To be scourged in the market-place while a great fire flickers and
flashes,

And then to be cast thereon, and thy body consumed to ashes."

He ceased, and a shudder of awe broke forth from the lieges
assembled.

Death-pale the prisoner stood, but her lips neither pleaded nor
trembled.

Back to the dungeon she fared. Oh, pursue her with pity and
sorrow!

Censure and scorn may be spared, for she perished in flame on the
morrow.

The deed was done, and the sun amid clouds, as in horror,
descended:

Homeward, sullen and sad, the compassionate multitude wended.

Haunted, each one, by a scene which the tears of a life-time de-
manded,

Deep in their pitiful hearts every token of agony branded.

Nor less, on the morrow at noon, ere the doom of the Despot found
him,

Sullen and sad were the hearts of the courtiers gathered around
him.

He, from his throne in the midst, with an ominous brow surveyed
them,

Scornful and fierce was his eye, and the dread of his wrath dismayed them.

Listen! a murmur without, and a medley of turbulent voices!
Culminant soon in the shout of a crowd that exults and rejoices.

Silence ensued for a space, ere the ponderous portals parted;
Then with a cry on his lips from his musing the Great King started.

Lo, on the threshold, the sun on the blade of his drawn sword
glancing,

Bertram appeared, and at once to the foot of the throne advancing,

Halted! The passion of each blazed into the soul of the other,
And the sword of the prince was sheathed in the pitiless heart of
his brother.

The King's Wooing

WHAT commoner is this, who seeks admittance to the King?
A stranger in the palace, he! What message does he
bring?

He presses on from room to room; he will not be denied,
And now confronts the king himself with unabated pride.

Young Edgar scanned his face awhile. "Who art thou?" he ex-
claimed;

And Rafe the yeoman answered: "One by whom thou shalt be
shamed!

"And yet, not thou; thy sire it was who wreaked the wrongs I tell,
Who made this earthly paradise a miniature of hell.

"Time was—and then we grudged you not your banquets—when, at
least,

The churl might live to labour, while the lord might live to feast.

"But grievous grows the yoke we bear, too grievous to be borne!
We starve to glut thy minions, yet are outraged by their scorn.

"And falsely, falsely, when we sued for justice to thy sire,
He mocked us with dissembling words which maddened us with
ire.

"Now, therefore, lest allegiance fail, befriend us in our need,
And make this desecrated land a paradise indeed."

He ceased ; and silence reigned, until, with crimsoned brow and cheek,

Young Edgar started from his throne, and thus began to speak :

“ Who art thou ? ” “ Rafe the yeoman, I. ” “ Then, Rafe the yeoman, hear !

To me, as to thyself, the cause of righteousness is dear.

“ I live to serve my people. As a pledge thereof I ask :
What counsel canst thou proffer to equip me for the task ? ”

“ What counsel can I proffer which thou lackest ? ” Rafe replied,
“ Thy heart shall be thy monitor, its love shall be thy guide.

“ Live thou to serve thy people. When those gallant words I tell,
The folk will make the rafters ring. And so, my liege, farewell ! ”

Well pleased, he turned and left the king, and fared upon his way.
But Edgar’s heart was troubled now, he could not rest that day.

What miseries were these ? He must explore them, and atone.
He doffed his jewels, doffed his robes, and sallied forth alone.

He wandered and he wandered, but his heart was troubled still,
The woodland ways were strewn with leaves, the woodland air was
chill.

He wandered and he wandered on, and in a lonely place
There came a maiden, tall and fair, and met him face to face.

A stranger to the king, and yet—Rafe’s daughter, Isabel,
A stranger to the king, and yet—he loved her passing well.

For, as he looked at her, he longed to tell her all his pain ;
And kindly, when he spoke, indeed, she answered him again.

Because the frankness of his brow, the sweetness of his voice,
Had made the heart of Isabel unwittingly rejoice.

Around them, through the dusky air, the trees were dimly seen,
As, pacing side by side, they talked, with many a pause between,

With many a dulcet pause, wherein Love's prelude might be heard,
But, far and wide, no sound beside of man or beast or bird.

Soon, all too soon, alas! they reached the margin of the wood,
And there he learned her name, and there, as, loth to part, they
stood,

She told him how, that very day, her sire had sworn to bring
The outrage of the people to the audience of the king.

"So all may yet be well," she said, "with our unhappy land,
If Edgar but be brave and true, and worthy to command."

She mused a moment, then, as one who weighs another part:
"How sad to be a king!" she cried, and pierced him to the heart.

"Sweet maiden, wilt thou comfort one?" with sudden zeal he
prayed,

"Sweet maiden, wilt thou serve the king, and all who need thine
aid?

"It is the king who kneels to thee, adoring, heart and soul;
Oh, share my task, for Love alone can speed me to the goal!"

She looked at him in silence, but he saw her lips uncloze,
For Love suffused her being as the sunlight steeps a rose,

And thereupon he kissed her lips, his doubts were cleared away;
The future seemed a fairyland, and love the break of day.

Glob and Alger ; or, the Winning of Helvig

A MAN of might and chivalry was Glob, the King of Thy, Who sailed one day to Fuurland, to conquer it or die. He won the isle, and slew the king, and reigned there in his stead, But over-sea the heir escaped, with a price upon his head.

Prince Eiler came to Sallingland, where Alger then did reign ; “ My heritage is lost,” he said, “ the king, my father, slain. Far have I wandered in despair, the bloodhounds on my track, Wilt thou betray me to their fangs, or prove the friend I lack ? ”

A goodly youth Prince Eiler was, King Alger liked him well. “ Thy fortunes yet may mend ! ” he cried. “ Meantime, securely dwell

Here in my fortress, an thou wilt, a lief and welcome guest, And dearly shall he rue the deed who dares thy path molest.”

So Eiler dwelt in Sallingland in peace and amity, First in the castle of the King, then in a homestead nigh. . Nathless, he nursed by night and day the sense of tarnished fame, And with unchanging purpose probed the future as with flame.

But Alger’s daughter Helvig, when she saw her father’s guest, And caught the note of bitterness that would not be repressed, Had pity on his wounded life, and talked with him apart, Sharing the travail of his brain, the rancour of his heart.

Established now in Fuurland, unquestioned still in Thy,
On Alger's realm, the Sallingland, Glob casts an envious eye.
He calls a council of his braves, a mail-clad force equips,
And, launched upon the foaming fiord, sets out with all his ships.

But when Glob came to Sallingland, ingloriously he fared,
For Alger with a dauntless band against him stood prepared.
So valiantly they fought, and well, that Glob was forced to fly,
And for the nonce content himself with Fuurland and Thy.

Among the thanes and vassals who embarked with Glob's array,
Young Birke, with a heart untouched by passion, went away,
Who, as he rode to parley with King Alger for his lord,
Saw Helvig at her lattice, and the lovely girl adored.

And when the war was ended, and with Glob he had returned,
With unabated ardour to behold her Birke burned :
He tarried till the fumes of hate had lifted for a space,
Then to King Alger's court repaired, hopeful of Helvig's grace.

But Helvig's heart, responsive to the instant stress of youth,
Had pledged its faith and freedom with unforced and flawless
truth;

For Eiler, in his own despite, her love had craved and won,
And Eiler she would wed withal, or she would wed with none.

Glob smiled on Birke's going—by his aid he looked to learn
In what propitious moment he to conquest might return ;
But Birke, frankly welcomed, warned King Alger to beware
Lest the peaceful protestations of his foe concealed a snare.

And so, when suave ambassadors at length to Alger came,
To a festival inviting him in Glob their master's name,

He with grave forbearance listened, weighed their words, and
weighed the men,
Answered simply: "Nay, I go not!" and dismissed them there and
then.

Incensed by this denial, Glob demands, without delay,
That Birke and Prince Eiler be surrendered as his prey:
"This Birke proves a traitor, and a traitor's death shall die!"
But Alger, nothing daunted, deigned not even to reply.

So Birke by good counsel won the friendship of his host;
Of all who sued for Helvig, Alger favoured him the most.
Not that he loved not Eiler, but, since benefits constrain,
He strove to wean his daughter from her troth-plight, but in vain.

Drear winter was impending, bitter blew the Northern gale
When Alger's thanes and franklins came to quaff the Yuletide ale.
And, won by courtly artifice, the king hath vowed, they say,
That Helvig shall be Birke's bride before the New-Year's day.

But suddenly, on Yuletide-eve, when wassail reigned within,
The watchman's bugle sounded clear above the mirthful din;
Hark! footsteps nearing! Who is this who bursts into the hall?
A wild and breathless messenger confronts the gaze of all.

Abashed he stood there, then advanced and knelt before the king.
"To thee and to thy guests," he cried, "ill tidings do I bring:
At daybreak, gazing Four-wards, I clearly could descry
Glob's masts, an ensigned multitude, that steadfastly drew nigh."

"For this, thy zeal, we thank thee," said the king, "whate'er betide.
But comest thou on foot, or, peradventure, dost thou ride?"
"No horseman I!" he answered, "but my son, who holds thee
dear,

Tarried to learn what might befall, and he should soon be here."

The words he spoke seemed to evoke a clarion-blast that sang
Thrice overhead ; anon with hoofs the embattled courtyard rang.
Eftsoons appeared before the king, and in obeisance bent,
A stalwart youthful warrior, with mire and foam besprent.

“ O, king,” he cried, “ be stirring ! For thy foes are near at hand !
Behind them, villages are black, ensanguined is the land ;
With greedy exultation each fair pasture they behold,
And Glob, among his kinsmen, is their leader proud and bold.”

“ So ! ” Alger cried, “ since we disdained to grace the feast he held,
He comes to ours, a forward wight, who will not be repelled !
And we, my guests, will welcome him ; what need to urge you more ?
Who stays for admonition when the wolf is at the door ? ”

But Alger’s thanes on feasting, not on fighting, were intent,
And glanced at one another with sly tokens of dissent ;
And the king, with sad forebodings of disaster and disgrace,
Read the sentence of abandonment in each averted face.

Shamefaced and silent stood the guests, none dared to lift his
brow ;

But hist ! another step draws near, fair Helvig enters now.
Her cheek was flushed with high resolve, her bosom rose and fell ;
Upon their hushed suspense her voice broke like a tuneful bell :

“ My heart,” she said, “ was given to Prince Eiler long ago ;
To him the dear allegiance of a plighted maid I owe.
Yet hearken, ye who sued to me, whose vows I did withstand,
To him who saves my sire from shame I dedicate my hand.”

Strange power of beauty, to revive the manhood of the soul !
Entranced they listened, ere she ceased their wounded faiths were
whole.

With brandished blades they greeted her, and plaudits long and loud ;

To share the fortunes of the king for good or ill they vowed.

Homeward, anon, the guests repaired, to snatch brief rest and sleep ;

But when at last the fortress vast was hushed in silence deep,
Fair Helvig through a postern crept, a maiden by her side,
And to Eiler's lowly dwelling by a secret pathway hied.

Prince Eiler from his couch arose to greet the damsels twain,
And "Sleep no longer!" Helvig cried, "lest plighted love be vain.
My father's foe confronts us with unprecedented might,
And him who saves us, this my hand in wedlock must requite."

Thus Helvig ; and anon she turned and left him standing there,
And motionless he mused awhile, resolved to greatly dare.
But presently he girded on his weapons keen and bright,
And, folded in a dusky cloak, set forth into the night.

On through the darkness glides the prince, Glob's fires a beacon-lamp,

And, by a rush-grown fosse concealed, soon peers into the camp.
There all was movement, for the king stayed but the break of day,
And there he watched the host prepare their trappings for the fray.

He tarried till the blazing logs declined to embers dim,
Then forth he stept, the foemen slept, thick shades encompassed him.

He passed the sentinels, and thence unchallenged held his way
On through a drowsy camp to where the sleeping monarch lay.

A turf-built hovel sheltered him—'neath zealous hands it grew,
The doorway hung with wolf-skin hides, which now the prince with-drew ;

His dagger-hilt he firmly grasped, his heart with triumph swelled,
With noiseless tread he entered, and his prostrate foe beheld.

Upon an oaken bench he lay, his features calm upturned,
A scarlet cloak about him thrown, while near at hand there burned
A torch, which filled with fragrant fumes the frosty mid-night air,
And cast upon the sleeper's form a fitful ruddy glare.

Close at his elbow stood the prince, the dagger in his hand,
Remembering his murdered sire, his ravished crown and land,
Remembering the countless ills he suffered in his flight,
The bitter shame of tarnished fame, and ignominious plight.

"Shall wrongs like these be tamely borne," he mused in vengeful
ire,

"When one swift blow would end the foe, and compass my desire?
Here beats the heart that moves a host our ramparts to assail,
Whose life-blood spilled, their hopes were chilled, and ours might
yet prevail.

"Yet thus to smite a witless wight what loyal hand would dare?
E'en as he fell asleep, methinks, he breathed his evening prayer!
His hands are clasped upon his breast, his lips, half-parted, smile;
Not love itself could recompense a deed so base and vile!

"Yet by some token Glob shall know that death has passed him
by,

It needs must gall his pride to feel the touch of clemency!"
His dagger in the couch he fixed, hard by the sleeper's head,
Then, passing forth, escaped, and thence to Alger's castle sped.

With bounding pulses Alger heard the wondrous tale he told.
"A valiant feat was this," he cried, "and chivalrous as bold!
For liefer I would fail or die with honour still unstained
Than purchase life or lordship by a deed my soul disdained."

At dawn the bugles roused the foe in slumber deep entranced ;
Glob's banner wooed the morning breeze, his myrmidons advanced,
And ere the bells beyond the firth for matins had begun,
Sheer weight of numbers proved their worth, and Alger's hold was
won.

Strife ended, in the castle yard victor and vanquished meet.
King Alger doffs his golden crown, and lays it at Glob's feet.
Glob, smiling, wipes his heated brow, his helmet in his hand,
"Now wherefore, brother, thus bestow the crown of Sallingland ?

"Methinks but now it graced thy brow right valiantly!" he cried.
"Who wins the realm should wear the crown," his vanquished foe
replied.

"Thou wouldst not come to me," said Glob, half-sternly, half in
jest,

"And therefore am I here to-day an uninvited guest.

"But for the crown thou layest down, resume it, friend, I pray ;
And somewhat more I would restore, if now, perchance, I may :
This dagger near me whilst I slept, fixed by some hand unknown,
I could but guess, and, I confess, accounted it a loan."

Then Eiler, standing forth, exclaimed, "That weapon, Glob, is
mine :

Thy life was at my mercy, and I left it as a sign
That one who long had loathed thy name, and cursed it in despair,
Yet rather chose defeat at last than slay thee unaware."

"Gramercy, friend!" cried Glob, "and now to end this bootless
feud!

Thou shalt not find me loth to pay the debt of gratitude.
If, Alger, thou wilt grant the prince thy daughter Helvig's hand,
I pledge me to resign to him the realm of Fuurland."

He ceased ; and Alger, deeply moved, embraced his foe with tears,
Renouncing utterly the wrath and enmity of years.
So when the guests of yestere'en returned in force anon,
They found the strife abandoned and the wedding-feast begun.

Rosalie

“SISTER, I promised Rafe O'Dell,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !

“To meet him by the Wishing-Well,
And the dark night falling !

“But, sister dear, I will not go,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !

“I love not him, as well you know,
And the dark night falling !

“Go you instead, and tell him how,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !

“All day you've bathed my burning brow,
And the dark night falling !

“How all day long I've moaned in pain,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !

“And that I'll meet him never again,”
And the dark night falling !

“Oh, I will meet him, sister dear,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !

“And tell him all, so have no fear.”
And the dark night falling !

She's coifed her in her sister's hood,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
And started through the gloomy wood,
And the dark night falling !

Her heart within her bosom leaps,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
Rejoicing o'er the tryst she keeps,
And the dark night falling !

For love of him her wild heart aches,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
But since he loves not her, it breaks,
And the dark night falling !

For Sybil, who his love disdains,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
Love burns like fever in his veins,
And the dark night falling !

Yet, Rosalie is no less fair,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
Sad eyes, boon lips, resplendent hair,
And the dark night falling !

Beside the Wishing-Well she stands,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
She curbs her wild heart with her hands,
And the dark night falling !

She thinks, " Ah, once those lips to taste,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
" To lean my head upon his breast !
And the dark night falling !

" In Sybil's voice I'll murmur low,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
" My face from hers he'll never know."
And the dark night falling !

He came, he clasped her in his arms,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
He kissed away her soft alarms,
And the dark night falling !

He kissed her lips, her eyes, her hair,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
Oh, still and balmy was the air,
And the dark night falling !

He called her by her sister's name,
Heigho, the cuckoo calling !
Oh, bitter joy, triumphant shame,
And the dark night falling !

In Utopia

TWO lovers recline on the brow
Of the hill ; it is twilight at last.
A nightingale sings from a bough,
A song of the past.

A song of the terrible years
Of avarice, hunger, and strife,
When laughter was wedded to tears,
And death was called life.

When beauty was banished afar,
And joy was a fabulous dream,
And love was a cloud-curtained star,
And hope was its beam.

Word-Similes

WORDS may burn like vitriol or soothe like poppies,
Cut like knives, or smash like hammers,
Be as garbage or as perfume to the nostrils,
Or like air embrace and quicken.

Incompatibility

THE wisdom of age is mine, but the raptures of youth are
flown,
Would they might dwell together! what are they worth alone?

The Magus

In a lone oratory, at midnight, he invokes by the rites of high magic the spirit of one long dead.

“ MY purpose holds, albeit I seem to hear
An inward voice compelling doubt and fear,
My purpose holds, and midnight now is near.

“ O Love, long lost and mourned, my virgin bride,
At noon espoused, withdrawn at eventide,
And now supremely blest and sanctified.

“ If aught avail the practice of my art
With constancy in each minutest part,
Thou shalt assuage the yearnings of my heart.

“ When the last grains in yonder glass have run
The mystic rites appointed will be done,
And thou, the bourne of my adventure, won.

“ For then, devoutly kneeling in this place,
I shall transcend the bounds of time and space
And see thee in thy beauty face to face.

“ Upon the instant, when I meet thy gaze,
All doubts and questionings of bygone days
Will melt like vapour in the noon-tide rays.

“ And eloquent of Love’s benign control,
Thy beauty, like a sun-illumined scroll,
Will manifest the secret of the soul.”

Thus mused the Magus, and meanwhile pursued
His task sublime, the votive wreaths renewed,
The cypress burned, the emblemed past reviewed.

And by the wondrous alchemy of thought
Created in the chamber where he wrought
A universe concealing what he sought.

With fuming clouds of incense for a screen
He moved majestic, fateful and serene,
A symbol of the Power that works unseen.

For, purged by aspiration, dauntless eyes
May ransack the abyss, or pierce the skies
And take by storm the gates of Paradise.

When all was done he knelt with arms outspread,
And thrice, before he lifted up his head,
Invoked aloud the presence of the dead.

As, when the tortured waves beneath grow white,
A wounded gull that laboured in its flight
Is caught and whirled across the dome of night,

The necromancer felt within his soul
The floodgates of omnipotence unroll,
And, launched thereon, was borne towards the goal.

The veil that shrouds the threshold of the brain
As by a scimitar was cleft in twain,
And lo! a spirit in the void again!

But man's infirmity delayed him still,
With nameless fears the spawning hosts of ill
Beset the steadfast fortress of his will!

What if this task, accomplished with such pain,
Were impious, and this freedom, false and vain,
The guerdon of God's infinite disdain?

Such doubts assailed him with malignant breath,
Whispering, "Fool! behold the judgment saith
The wage of thy presumption shall be death."

These vapours of the soul he swept aside,
These fears contemned, these menaces defied,
Remembering the beauty of his bride.

That beauty contemplating, rather say,
For now there stood revealed an open way,
While sheer beyond the gates of jasper lay,

Which parted at his bidding, and behold!
Streets flooded with an atmosphere of gold,
Thronged with a radiant multitude untold.

And, from the dazzling verge of Paradise,
The foremost, **She**, while music thrilled the skies,
Gazed on her lover with benignant eyes.

So wondrous was her beauty and so bright
That, as he gazed and worshipped in delight,
The heavens behind her vanished out of sight.

No longer in the secret womb of space
But here on earth, love's old abiding place,
The living and the dead were face to face.

“ The Winter of Discontent ”

TALK not of Joy! our Joy is dead,
We sigh for him in vain,
Grief wears the diadem instead
And mortals drag the chain.

The Joy that was our king of old
Was neither just nor wise,
His benefits were bought and sold,
His promises were lies.

So we must share the yoke of Grief
Until the tyrant fall,
And banish thought of such relief
As is not free to all.

In Vinculis

THINK not, thou brutal world, to quell
My soul's intrinsic fire,
At most the joyless task compel ;
In bondage but invincible,
To freedom I aspire.

Whether with unremitting pain
In dungeon dark and vile
Henceforth I drag thy galling chain,
Or burst into the light again
To sun me there awhile,

My boast shall be a soul that's free,
A heart that loves and hates,
A voice that cries, Awake, Arise !
A flame of hope that never dies,
A song that celebrates.

Sisters Three

L AUGHTER looked me in the eyes
And I loved her well ;
“ Maiden, will you make me wise ? ”
“ Nay, but glad,” the maid replies,
So with her I must not dwell.

Beauty looked me in the eyes,
Ah, how sweet a glance !
Beauty would not make me wise
So I spurned her witcheries
Ere they bound me in a trance.

Sorrow looked me in the eyes,
Held me to her breast,
Kissed away my sobs and sighs,
Lo, I slept, and wakened wise :
Therefore I love sorrow best !

A Girl's Album

QUAINT conceits and swift surprises,
Gleaming grains of the gold of thought,
Vagrant memories, soft surmises
Mirth-begotten but wisdom-fraught.

Here the delicate hand of a lady,
Here the scrawl of ungainly man,
Rollicking humour of Mike O'Grady,
Pawky wit of the shrewd McCann.

Here a pastoral glimpse of beauty,
Here a tender blossoming spray,
Panegyric of love and duty,
Facile ditty and pensive lay.

Here the rhapsodies incidental
To bosom friendships a maiden gleams,
Sweet, but a trifle sentimental,
Trilled by school-fellows in their 'teens.

Gems of an untried erudition,
Maxims traced with strenuous care
By tiny fingers, whose main ambition
Was not to leave any smudges there.

Smile not though the small hand stumbled,
Though its tremors marred the page,
Notice rather, humanely humbled,
Lapses due to a riper age.

Such the volumes maidens cherish,
Worthily they esteem them dear,
For the flowers of spring-time perish,
But their sanctity fills the year.

We shall pine for them in December,
Here shall their withered leaves be found ;
Let each Philistine wight remember
Here he treads upon holy ground.

At the Gates

WHERE have I been to-night?
What mystic realm explored,
What wonderland, what palace of delight,
Where all things dazzling to the sight
And pleasant to the soul are stored?

I know not, for the burnished gates
With a crash of melody
Have shut; lo, here my spirit waits
Straining back with wistful eye!
All has faded suddenly,
Leaving in my memory
Only a sense of glory vanished,
Only regret that I am banished,
Only a voice that tells me I have come
From a brief glimpse of my eternal home!

I know well that I have been
Out of earth's domain,
To a place where Time and Space
Do not reign.
And I know that I have seen
Things whereof no mortal tongue
Dares to speak,
For our bravest words are weak,
But the choir of angel voices
Which around God's throne rejoices,
That is strong!
And to it such themes belong.

Unde et Quo ?

A BIRD flew into the banquet-hall
Out of the darkness, out of the night :
The torches flared on his dazzled sight,
The shadows wavered on roof and wall.

Round and round, for a space, he flew,
Beating the air in bewildered flight,
Then into the darkness, into the night
Swept again, and was lost to view.

November

BLEAK and bare
Hang the branches out in air,
And the mist is everywhere :
Summer's wings have taken flight
To some far country, out of sight.

Yes, at last,
Even thou art overpast,
Autumn, and thy leaves are cast
Unto one that garlandeth
With thy spoils the brows of Death.

In the wood
There is nought but solitude,
Save a spirit that doth brood,
Murmuring and making moan
Through the shadows, all alone.

Now, no more,
Children play along the shore,
But the wintry billows roar
Through the dismal afternoon
And the night that cometh soon.

When the day,
Brief and sunless, dies away,
Lo, we sorrow not, but say,
" In November dark and drear,
Night, we bid thee welcome here.

" With thy bright
Silver-shafted beams of light,
Come! the haunted woods invite
Thee to grace their ruined hall,
Turn their grief to festival."

The Immortals

CHILDREN of song are we,
Cradled in Castaly!
When we lay sleeping there
Sudden a lady fair,
Queen of the earth and air,
Wisdom, and fantasy,
Kissed us on cheek and brow;
We are immortal now,
What are our joys to thee?

Children of song are we,
Hark to our minstrelsy!
Not for thy thanks we pray:
Give them, or not, to-day,
In the far distant years
When thou hast passed away,
We shall win smiles and tears,
We shall be young and gay.
Still shall our voices then
Chime through the hearts of men
Rapturous roundelay.

Death cannot silence us
For we have conquered Death,
Gladness environs us,
Love is our breath.

Cameos

I.—Alcibiades

O SOCRATES, I love thee best of all,
For thou rebukest me with friendly zeal,
Not like the base curmudgeons who invoke
The curses of the gods behind my back.
I am the darling of the people now,
And life to me is one long festival,
But fortune and the Greeks are changeable,
And I may yet need wisdom for my shield
Against the lances of calamity.

II.—“ El Draque ”

(*Plymouth Hoe*, 1588.)

M^Y ships grow foul in the bay
And I watch with a troubled heart,
And God knows why we delay,
And God knows when we depart !

I have pillaged of gems and gold
The arrogant lords of Spain,
I have scoured with my messmates bold
The creeks of the Spanish main.

I have opened the gates of the South
And carried the keys away,
And full in the cannon's mouth
Have flaunted my colours gay.

And the papist crew at last
Will sail for my native land
Whilst I, like a dog held fast,
Still wait for my Queen's command.

Ah, if I were free to go
I would fly at the throat of Spain,
And Philip should know that his deadly foe
"The Dragon" was loosed again!

III.—Francis Bacon

"Meditor instaurationem philosophiae ejusmodi quae nihil inanis aut abstracti habeat, quaeque vitae humanae condiciones in melius provehat."

EMERGING from the slough of self-contempt,
My spirit plumes her wings exultantly
And overlooks the future and the past.
What though my present glory be effaced,
The tempest-rack of shame will disappear!
What though I slipped and stumbled, even fell,
The lamp I carry burns unbroken yet!
To kindly critics I commend my name,
To future ages and to distant lands:
What I have filched, against what I confer,
Is as a farthing to a mine of gold!

IV.—Cromwell Speaks

HOW dreadful is our state! Launched upon life
(No choice in that), with souls immortal charged,
Destined, as our desert is well or ill,
To spend eternity in cloudless bliss
Or in the seething cauldron of despair!
Wherefore I count them fools, and trebly fools,
Who palter with God's holy ordinance,
Put off the day of righteousness, defer
Till Death's approach the business of the soul.
Till Death's approach! Alack! that footfall steals
In ghostly silence nearer hour by hour,
And who of us can vouch but that Death stands
Even now upon his threshold? Vital airs
May breed corruption. All things here below
Are death's emissaries and ministers,
All capable of God's inscrutable will.

V.—Nelson Embarks

(*Portsmouth, 1805.*)

YET one more blow to strike for England's weal,
One force to seize or shatter on the main,
Then love shall be the recompense of zeal,
And peace enfold my destiny again.

So may it prove, unless perchance to die
In battle-smoke my prouder portion be,
While English cannon thunder to the sky,
Proclaiming England mistress of the sea!

Queries

WHAT churl but will applaud the pranks
Of conjurors and mountebanks?

* * * *

Whence this horror? Can it be
That the devil visits me?

* * * *

What are you telling me nightingale?
Is it the truth or a fairy-tale?

* * * *

Say whence and why the instinct came
Which maddens moths to enter flame?

* * * *

Is love, at best, a bargain, made
On sordid principles of trade?

* * * *

Evil and good exist, as dark and light,
But which is which, I wonder. Set me right!

* * * *

Hope is bitter; is despair
Worse or easier to bear?

* * * *

What is it in this man that seems to stain
The sense-recording structure of my brain?

* * * *

Is that a line of hills out yonder,
Is it a vapour-bank, I wonder?

* * * *

Who shall determine the force of a thought
Duly embodied and perfectly wrought?

Confessions

EMANCIPATE myself, I burn
To kindle and release in turn.

* * * *

My rambles and my thoughts endear
The spring and autumn of the year.

* * * *

My eyes are straining into the dim east,
I see a god who smiles upon a beast.

* * * *

Symbols mock my discontent,
Give me all they represent.

* * * *

This niggard sheaf contains the garnered salvage of my
youth :

Man is a god in chains, and falsehood is the rind of
truth.

* * * *

I find more profit in caresses
Than theological addresses.

* * * *

O Nature thou hast made me well,
I know the taste of heaven and hell!

* * * *

What allured me, now, as law,
Threatens me and I withdraw.

* * * *

I renounce the quest of thought,
She shall come to me unsought.

* * * *

Something whispers in my ear,
Do not hope, for I am near!

* * * *

I seek no more, I claim no less
Than recognition and redress.

* * * *

To love my task
Is all I ask.

* * * *

Let me whisper to my friend,
If it must be so, I bend.

* * * *

All these accusations true?
Certainly they are—to you!

* * * *

I bear with all who bear with any,
I love the few that love the many.

* * * *

When I can walk I mean to try
The wings I look for by-and-bye.

* * * *

A giant figure haunts me, bent
Beneath a world of punishment.

* * * *

Countless midges by their stings
Fret my fair imaginings.

* * * *

Sad mortals, I collect some rays
To beautify your dismal days.

* * * *

Although I yield where Fate compels
My spirit none the less rebels.

* * * *

This ladder leads up to the star
Whose beauty beckons me afar.

* * * *

It may be I have chosen ill,
Although my choice contents me still.

* * * *

The Past and Future are at strife,
Each claims to be my lawful wife.

* * * *

My broken life makes broken melody,
Let gods aspire to continuity!

* * * *

World, I resign with frank display to thee,
Since both are thine, the best and worst of me.

* * * *

Not what I will, but what I must, I sing,
My moods are many, many gifts they bring.

* * * *

Cowardice was my transgression,
I have purged it by confession.

* * * *

Lilies plucked by the hand of Death,
I weary now of your fragrant breath.

* * * *

Welcome Sorrow, if I did you wrong,
Pardon me my dear, you tarried long!

* * * *

Reckon me of those who dwell
Near the boundaries of hell.

* * * *

Consumed with passion for the best,
My weary spirit may not rest.

* * * *

A burden and a yoke,
And a heart that never broke!

To Algernon Charles Swinburne

"Glory to Man in the highest, for Man is the master of things!"

BRAVE Singer, that wouldst banish hence
The lightnings of Omnipotence,
We scorn thy paltry recompense,
Thy passion-stained Divinity.

Thou that for aught diviner than
Thy crownless god, the soul of man,
With purblind eyes didst vainly scan
The shoreless deep infinity!

Fly, on the axle-tree of Time,
In shrill small voice of mortal rhyme,
Claiming a dignity sublime—
The sceptre of the universe!

Thy spirit, framed for other things,
Disdains to mount on tireless wings,
The trivial cares of Earth she sings,
To Heaven-aspiring tune averse.

Thou criest—"Lo, the God I sought,
The sovereign king of kings is Thought,
By whom all others shall be brought
To death and scorn perpetual!

" O Man, there is no law but thine,
Thy spirit only is divine,
Let this new gospel rise and shine
Upon the doubts that fret you all.

" For I have probed the infinite
By Reason's pale transcendent light,
And chaos yielded to my sight
No Master Spirit moulding it.

" Darkness I saw that blindly strove
Towards day, and hate that turned to love,
And yet this wonder did not move
My soul to awe, beholding it.

" Swept by the hurricane of force
Which through the cosmic æther roars,
Millions of suns kept on their course
Athwart the drear immensity.

" And monster worlds on either hand,
To which the orb whereon we stand
Seemed as a speck, a grain of sand,
'An atom, a nonentity.

" All this I saw! And turned away
To mock the splendour of the day,
And said, behold, even these obey,
Man's sovereign will unveiling them.

" Is not the intellect, whose light
Reveals the starry heavens aright,
Greater than these? The shades of night
Yield to our charm assailing them.

"Cease then to marvel, cease to fear,
Bow to no Gods, your Gods are here,
Man only, let mankind revere,

Henceforward through futurity!"

So thou hast spoken: by each word
The nations east and west were stirred,
When lo! a still, small voice was heard
Breathed down the vast obscurity.

"Not so! this poet falsely sings,
Beholding but the face of things,
Deaf to the murmur of the wings
Of angels passing over him.

"Dimly he knows that I am near,
And when I whisper in his ear
The secrets that he will not hear,
He bids the darkness cover him.

"So be it! let the voice be dumb
To him, yet in the time to come,
As at the beating of a drum,
My people shall return to Me.

"In earth and sky My wisdom speaks,
In every wave that shoreward breaks,
A message comes to all, and wakes
The heart to thoughts that yearn to Me.

"For earth and sky and sea are mine,
Mere fringes of one vast design,
Where-through My love and splendour shine
In token of Eternity!"

The Wasp

SILLY wasp, in frenzied circles wheeling,
While you buzz and blunder at the ceiling,
Open wide the window waits, revealing
Liberty impassively appealing.

Arrival

DO you not love the sea on a summer day,
With its languid waves curling across the bay,
To swell and break with a blissful sigh at your feet,
Whispering, "Life was well, but death's complete!"

Types

PENSIVE on the wall I lean
Gazing at the shifting scene,
With a contemplative eye
Noting all the passers-by :
Here a lord and there a clown ;
Here a shaven fop from town ;
Here a country lass, and there
One who paints and dyes her hair ;
Here the slouching deity
Of new-born democracy ;
Here a fool who flogs his brains
For gold, and gets it for his pains ;
And, too soon, some haggard elf
Who recalls me to myself.

The Anarchist

A THWART the windy steep of time,
I watch the toil-worn people climb,
No place for rest, no hour to stay,
And some are fainting by the way.
And in their ears a weary chime
Tolls on unceasing day by day,
As through the mire of blood and slime,
'Neath darkened skies of wintry grey,
Footsore and sad they press along,
A slavish, unresisting throng.

And some are men, whose tottering gait,
And downcast looks, disconsolate,
And palsied limbs, for pity cry.
But all in vain—no passer-by,
Though some there be that falsely prate
Of human love and charity,
Will ever heed their bitter fate,
Whose only refuge is—to die.
They that have toiled so far must still
Creep slowly up the barren hill.

And some are young and stalwart, men
Of sun-scorched brow and fiery ken,
For life and all its joys athirst,
And love that tasteth sweet at first,
Till damning knowledge comes, but then,
Illumined by the ray accurst,

As the caged lion in his den

Awakes to bonds he fain would burst,
So man against his iron-bound cage
Beats out his heart in helpless rage.

And some are women, struggling on
With starveling children, weak and wan,
And haggard looks and weary eyes
Dilated with a wild surprise.

They come, they pass and they are gone
To meet their stormy destinies,
A piteous sight to gaze upon,
A sight to make the dullard wise,
A sight to set the angels weeping
If God and angels were not sleeping.

And some are priests, of cunning glance
And sleek, well-favoured countenance,
Whose brazen lips declaim aloud,
Adjuring thus the shrinking crowd :
O fools, we pipe that ye may dance,
And this is well—your lives are vowed
That ours in languid elegance
With nobler attributes endowed
May softlier glide ; the strife to you,
To us the victor's palm is due.

And some go madly reeling by
Soul-steeped in drunken ecstasy,
Their temples wreathed with budding vines,
Their garments dyed with purple wines.
Shameless, without one passing sigh,
One thought which momentarily repines

At death and blear-eyed misery,
Each laughs and sings and brawls and dines,
And tramping down a thousand lives
His tributary joy contrives.

Athwart the windy steep of Time
I watch the toil-worn people climb,
I mark them as they stride along,
Youthful and aged, weak and strong ;
In sly deceit or open crime,
Or hounded by the biting thong
Of cruel famine, through the slime
Of tears and blood, the motley throng,
Into the future dim and grey,
Pursues its unheroic way.

And as I gaze my startled eyes
With scornful pity recognise
One linkéd chain which, through and through,
Unbroken, binds the abject crew,
Unites the foolish with the wise,
The murderer with the life he slew,
Kings with the subjects they despise,
Famine with plenty, false with true.
My soul to greet one freeman craves
In vain : all, all are fettered slaves !

But I, long since, my bondage broke,
Scorning to share the ignoble yoke :
Death to the Tyrant ! To the slave
A coward's fall, a trampled grave !
The curse of each I here invoke
On me and mine ; and I would brave

Torture and death to deal the stroke
That plunged them 'neath a whelming wave.
Heaven I abjure, and hell defy,
All hail, immortal Anarchy!

O fools that prate with honeyed lips
Of death's defeat and crime's eclipse!
For universal war shall come
Ere that long-sought Millennium.
Mine be the hand that rudely strips
Your oracle to strike you dumb,
Till at the drear apocalypse
Earth turns a pandemonium,
And in the frenzy of despair
Men hail my mistress everywhere.

"All hail, immortal Anarchy!"
I hear the frantic nations cry,
When mad with lust that burns to slay
They throng thy mystic shrine that day,
Thy secret shrine set up on high
Amid the tumult of the fray,
Veiled hitherto from human eye,
Till now the veil is snatched away,
And lo, the Freedom they desire,
The dream that set their hearts afire.

Naked she stands, yet unashamed,
And smiles to see her people tamed
From rage to sullen depths of woe:
She saith: "O fools, why mourn ye so?
Long have ye wept for me, and framed
Strange prayers for perfect Freedom. Know

That I am she : your passion claimed
No fairer bride. Take me, or go!
All things begin and end in me,
And I alone can set you free ! ”

Lo, she hath spoken ; now a yell,
As from the deepest pit of hell,
From the four corners of the world
Against the shuddering stars is hurled.
It is the nations' dying knell,
Then all the air in smoke is whirled,
Smoke of a flame that nought shall quell!
Thy blood-red banner is unfurled,
O thou whose advent I descry,
Twin-birth of Chaos—Anarchy !

What matter if ye end at last
O lives by fear and woe downcast?
Who would not pay with pangs so sweet
The creditor whom none can cheat?
Recall the sorrows of the past,
Behold the tyrant at your feet,
Then, plunged in ruin wild and vast,
Let Man's destruction be complete.
In one red world-consuming fire,
One baptism of blood expire !

The Poet

THE poet is he who is mad and sane in a breath,
Who tells the lie that is true, the truth that is false,
Who can say the thing that cannot be said,
Who loves God, and defies Him,
Who is loved by God and forsaken.

Ode to London

HERE in a quiet place I sit afar
And dream of thee to-night,
City of wonders, in whose keeping are
All secrets of delight!
Whose hospitable arms and bosom wide
And fathomless eyes, inscrutable,
With dreadful potency invite
Princes and peers and beggars to thy side,
Yea, even poets, meant by God to dwell
In strenuous calm where skies are pure as death,
Building eternal fanes of perishable breath!

Tell me, dread mistress, tell
What undiscernéd spell
Thou weavest for the foolish hearts of men!
What intricate net whereby
Thou snarest evermore into thy den
Not only folk that haply dwell anigh,
But many eke from alien strands,
Dim regions of the earth, sequestered lands,
Who, having known thee, burn, they know not why,
Intolerably,
To look thee in the face
Lie folded in thy terrible embrace,
Once, even once again, before they die.

There be cities, well I trow,
Fairer a hundred-fold than thou,
Paris, whose pleasant waters gleam
Far otherwise than thy polluted stream,

Sunny Athens, peerless Rome,
Florence—Beatrice's home,
And Venice, where at ease we lie,
Poised, as it were, 'twixt earth and sky,
Gazing on palaces that seem
To move to music in a dream!

Foul art thou, and fair are they,
Yet not one of them entrances
Like the glamour of thy glances,
Thou blasphemer of the day!
None of them hath equal sway
Over all men's fancies!

In thy fatal eyes that burn
Through the darkness luridly,
They that stand afar discern
Splendid infamy.
Thou hast slain and hast devoured,
Cruel city,
Thine own offspring, without pity
Luring maids to be deflowered
In thy secret places.
None are sacred in thy sight:
Thou that art hermaphrodite
Men and women dost invite
To thy foul embraces!

O sepulchre of virtue, in thy streets
Vice walks triumphant now!
Thy poor are plagued with usurers and cheats,
Whom, shameless wanton! thou
With venal favour deignest to endow.
Thy scèptre is a two-edged sword to smite

The pilgrims of the light,
Thy feet are shod with brass to trample them
Whom, for their love, thy satellites condemn.
Yet whilst they perish 'neath the pitiless blight
Of envy, ruined, overwhelmed and hurled
Like sand upon the blast,
Their souls live on in very death's despite,
Their burning thoughts are leavening the world
And shall prevail at last!

Here in a quiet place I sit afar,
And dream of thee to-night,
City of terrors, in whose keeping are
All secrets of affright,
City of wonders, city of delight!
Here all is peaceful, here the heavens are bright
With many a star;
Contentment broods upon the sleeping earth,
Which shall arise ere long
Greeting the day with matutinal song
And sounds of unpremeditated mirth;
I, only I, no sweet oblivion take,
But, hymning thee, my wonted rest forsake.
I, that have poured the vials of my scorn,
Not less, ah me! am torn
With love of thee, than hate!
I own thy spell, implacable as fate,
And wheresoe'er I roam,
For thee I hunger still, for thee I burn,
Thou art my spirit's home.
And London, be it soon, or be it late,
To thee I shall return!

The Song

A SONG that swells and rises
Within me, and surprises
My soul, but will not stay,
For whilst I gaze and hearken
The music dies away,
The shadows fall and darken
The earth, and all is grey!

A song that will not leave me
But comes back soon to grieve me,
Till I discern the strain,
A symphony of sadness,
A rhapsody of pain,
A melancholy madness
That masters me again.

A song so full of passion
No words that I can fashion
Will ever make it plain;
A song whereof the sorrow
I strive to tell in vain,
The sense of it I borrow,
But lose the sweet refrain.

A song that changeth duly,
Now plaintive, now unruly,
 But never gay at first,
Till by-and-bye the sadness
 Is conquered at its worst,
In brimming waves of gladness
 I quench my spirit's thirst.

A song that knows no measure
Of buoyancy and pleasure,
 A song that whirls me far
From earthly hopes and cravings
 To Beauty's quiet star,
From ribald poet-ravings
 To where the singers are!

Vicissitude

I.

THERE is something in you that my soul has been blindly
seeking,

Ah! this is the love which the poets have named immortal.

II.

After all, it was but an ephemeral frenzy,
Shall I be chained for life to the corpse of a passion!

III.

Take me back to your heart, I have loved you always;
Under the cloak of my falsehood, Love lay sleeping.

Exodus

I.—Through Dungeon Bars

SONGS have no listeners now, is the sneer of the passionless worldling.

Come, I will give you the lie, drench you with billows of song!
When you can silence the roar of the hurricane-drifted Atlantic
Charging its adamant walls, Reason shall vanquish Desire.

I who have tasted the dregs of despair at your pitiful banquet,

I, who impersonate scorn, stand in your presence and sing,
Once you shall share my delight, I will ravish you upward and
onward,

Safety and gold are your gods, freedom and ecstasy mine;
Hunger and thirst are the wings of my rapture, and this is its
burden,

Pleasure is pleasant indeed, agony bitter to bear.
Once for a time I was joyous, unheeding the fetters I carried;
Leaping your fences with scorn, following Nature afield;
Slaking my thirst at the fountains, polluted, alas! at their sources,
Eating the apples you prized—poisonous apples they proved!
Soon, while I slumbered, you seized me, and bound me with
weightier shackles,

Scourged me and branded my brow, doomed me to dolorous
toil;
Tremble, you pitiless worldlings, the day of your downfall ap-
proaches,

Sooner perhaps than we dream, Beauty and Joy shall prevail!

Sooner perhaps than we dream, for the heart of the agonised
nations

Throbs with tumultuous hopes, hopes that emerge from despair,
Hopes of a jubilant morrow of buoyant awakening rapture,
Sense of the buds of delight ready to blossom at last.

II.—Marching Song

SOMNOLENT brothers, awaken! the night of our bondage is
over,

Shatter the bolts of your cells, cankered already with rust,
Notice with pity and scorn the dismay of your palsied oppressors,

Leave them and burst with delight into the bountiful air.
Suddenly, as at a signal, our tenement crashes behind us

Into a ruinous heap, burying all that remain,
All who rejected the seers who promised a worthier mansion

Built amid laughter and song, lofty and spacious and fair.
Now for a season the bliss of exuberant freedom suffices,

Under our feet is the sward, over us arches the sky,
Beauty reanimates hope and the smouldering embers of passion,

Nature, the mother of all, takes us again to her breast.
“Children,” the mother exclaims, “it was I who demolished your
dungeon,

Freedom or death you besought, freedom and life I bestow;
Comfort you after your sorrows, essay the delights of my kingdom,
Fearlessly follow me on whithersoever I lead.”

Now there is rending of irons and girding of loins for the journey,
Laughter and sobs of delight break from the hearts of the
throng,

Then with a shout that awakens the sullen response of the moun-
tains

Teaching them Liberty's name, upward and onward we go.

Up the long slopes we advance, we are glad of the breath of the
morning,

Glad of the dew on the grass, glad of the light of the sun,
Glad of the river below, on whose indolent surface a shadow,
Eloquent long of our doom, never again shall appear.

Up the long slopes we advance, we meander through devious
gorges,

Often the track of our guide narrowly skirts an abyss,
Perilous here in our path, but we follow the footprints of Nature,
Safely at last we emerge into the sunlight again.

Broadly extending before us a barren expanse is unfolded,

Pine-girdled mountains beyond bar the approach to our goal,
Onward we hasten again, and at length, when the forest receives us,
Many a mile we have marched under the absolute sky.

Sombre and cool is the forest, a boon are its verdurous couches,
Now we are up and away, strengthened anew by repose,

Pressing persistently onward, impelled by unwavering purpose,

Meeting and piercing the gloom, slowly developed above,
Steadfastly scaling the mountain, triumphantly reaching the summit,
Greeting with rapturous cries all that awaits us beyond.

Gazing benignantly forth like a King at the door of his palace,

Careless of sceptre and crown, careful to welcome his guests,
Lo, the Sun sets over-sea in the midst of a pageant of splendour,

Firmament, ocean, and plain, flooded with crimson and gold!
Hark! it is Nature who speaks; and her voice is the voice of the
stillness

(When was her presence absorbed into the soul of the night?)

"Children, I bid you descend and repose at the foot of the moun-
tain,

There shall your tenement stand, proudly confronting the sea;
After the winter of sorrow I bring you the summer of gladness,
After the desolate years Beauty and Joy shall prevail."

The Song of the Masons' Guild

COMRADES, let us build ourselves a mansion
In a pleasant place beyond the mountains.
Let it be of granite and of limestone,
Firmly based upon secure foundations,
Excellently built and well-proportioned.
Let there be a colonnade with cloisters
And a balcony adorned with statues,
And a lofty dome of clearest crystal
Open to the quiet stars at midnight.
Turrets, too, with flags displayed upon them,
Silken flags to shimmer in the sunshine :
One watch-tower, also, looking seaward.
Let the doors be carved in quaint devices,
And the window-panes emblazoned richly,
And the wainscots curiously carven.
Let there be no lack of spacious chambers,
Banquet-rooms with pictured walls and ceilings,
Corridors and cool conservatories,
Noble stairs and hospitable chimneys,
Kitchens, workshops, granaries, and stables.
Let the gardens be a dream of beauty,
And a treasure-house of gold the orchards.
Let there be a lake beset with fountains,

Dryads peering through umbrageous foliage,
Nooks withal and bosky wildernesses ;
And, beyond, the undulating pastures
And the gleaming river and the ocean.
All must be the work of boon companions ;
Let the women's and the children's voices
And their laughter tunefully commingle
With the cheerful clinking of the trowels.
There shall be a feast when all is ended
In the pleasant shadow of the elm trees,
And at eventide, in long procession,
Singing and rejoicing, we will enter
This great house that we have built and furnished,
There to dwell in fellowship and fealty.

Filial Greeting

A SWEET girl stoops to kiss her father,
And her lips cling softly to his brow,
As a butterfly alighting for a moment in the sun
Basks on a weather-stained wall.

To Lovers

L OVERS who loiter in fragrant sandy lanes,
Fairy dells and primrose-carpeted copses,
Now you are tasting the wine of life at its best,
Haply soon to be salt with tears and bitter.

The Seeker

AH, to what end these holocausts of woe?
I know not, and belike I ne'er shall know;
But with strained eyes for Truth's own face athirst,
With steadfast eyes that shrink not from the worst,
I probe the darkness, multitudinously
Flecked with red fires of nameless agony.
I search the universe, but strive in vain
To solve the riddle of the Masque of Pain,
The boundless ocean of untravelled space
Confronts me like a stern impassive face,
Whose deep eyes ponder thoughts beyond my ken,
Ungessed at by the fevered hearts of men.
Methinks if once I could but meet their gaze
New light would pierce the darkness of my days.
And, even were it death to meet them, I
Would drink the secret of those orbs and die.
But, ah! unnumbered hearts have shared my lust—
Unnumbered hearts that long ago were dust!
On Time's vast desert 'neath the unchanging sky
The bones of strayed truth-seekers bleaching lie.
How should I find what these men vainly sought
With tireless toil—the master-key of thought;

That rumoured or, perchance, that fabled, key
Which opens all the doors of mystery!
A seeker I, though many a blatant voice
With earth-bound wisdom chides me for my choice,
Protesting, "Why this waste of human zeal,
Why question Circumstance with vain appeal?
Back to the swift kaleidoscope of life,
The joy of mastery, the zest of strife;
Haphazard turn the wheels that crush and grind,
Fate rules the universe, and Fate is blind!"
Ah, sophists, by what curb will ye control
The God-like thirst and hunger of the soul?
Deep calls to deep; no answer yet we hear,
Save when some cheating echo mocks the ear.
Not therefore shall our hearts their quest resign:
The mists may clear, the sunlit peaks outshine.
An empty wrangle on a Dead Sea shore
Is life when Man, the Seeker, seeks no more.

Stars of Thought

I.—Plato

AUSTERE law-giver, heaven-aspiring bard,
With eyes far-set beyond the mists of Time,
Chanter of runes oracular, sublime,
And melodies to grosser ears debarred !
Too stern thy precepts, and thy way too hard
For souls immersed in earthy toil and grime ;
Yet, when thou callest, rapture bids us climb,
To where thou standest radiant and unscarred.

Plato, the heedless world has passed thee by,
At newer shrines our pert soothsayers bow ;
But wisdom such as thine can never die,
Thy flute-like tones may ravish us again,
And, like Minerva issuing from Jove's brow,
Thy great Republic dawn at last for men.

II.—Aristotle

ALERT, but steadfast, eager, yet serene,
Humble, but soaring, and profound, but clear,
Urbane, yet, in the cause of truth, severe,
To Plato, well-beloved, aye, worshipped e'en;
Thy comprehensive grasp, thy vision keen,
Thy dauntless toil—stupendous these appear;
And in thy vast achievement we revere
The type of wisdom and the golden mean.

Truth was thy beacon, Justice was thy goal;
No fact was base or trivial to thy ken,
Nor in the parts did'st thou forget the whole,
Nor shun the darkness, nor evade the light:
So long as life has joy and sorrow, men
Shall bless the labours of the Stagirite.

III.—Plotinus

TO thee the solid universe appeared
A veil translucent to the strenuous gaze
Of Wisdom, pierced by coruscating rays
From some far source in dazzling light ensphered.
Thou wert as one who, when the mists had cleared,
Saw oversea the snow-clad mountains raise
Their peaks with dawn's effulgent hues ablaze,
And knew at once the land for which he steered.

Beyond that veil celestial shapes were seen
On works of awe and mystery intent,
Holding their course, majestic and serene,—
Archetypes of Beauty and the eternal Mind
Which in supernal rapture soared, and leant
On Love supreme, and thence their task divined.

IV.—Spinoza

SUBLIME Spinoza, in thy deathless page
We breathe a calmer, more exalted air,
Above the weeping clouds of earthly care,
Wild gusts of passion, hurricanes of rage.
Not as blind fools, or bondsmen, we engage
In Time's affray, or Life's affliction bear;
But, Thought's wide wings expanding, rise to where
The Arch-Tragedian overlooks the stage.

Gentle and brave and blameless was thy soul;
Clear, keen and resolute thy matchless mind!
Impatient of the sordid world's control,
And rock-like in the maintenance of right—
Such was the master-sage, who on mankind
Bestowed the science of the Infinite!

V.—Kant

“THEY do not lie, the voices that we hear
Breathing of God and immortality,
And, even as they say, our souls are free
To spurn or cherish Duty’s mandate clear.
I bring you to a summit, whence appear
The waters of a vast untravelled sea,
And then I bid you turn away with me
In wonder and bewilderment and fear.

“Man has no compass wherewithal to guide
His timorous bark across that pathless main,
No chart wherein the helmsman may confide;
Helpless he stands, and hears the breakers roar,
And knows the hunger in his heart is vain
That longs and sickens for the unknown shore!”

VI.—Hegel

AS one who ponders with heroic will
Some hieroglyph of eld or mystic scroll,
So did'st thou bend thy Herculean soul
To solve the mystery of good and ill.
In arduous contemplation, lone and still,
I watch thee brooding o'er the wondrous whole,
And share thy rapture when the clouds unroll—
And lo the purpose which the gods fulfil!

Titan of intellect, immortal fame
Attends thy labours! Vain their toil who seek
To brand with obloquy thy laurelled name!
Vain their attempt who think with ease to climb
Beyond thee to a dizzier height, or speak
With utterance more pregnant and sublime!

VII.—Schopenhauer

INVETERATE haunter of the paths of gloom,
Fierce questioner of Life and Life's misdeeds,
Against thy stern indictment vainly pleads
The Destiny that guides the cosmic loom!
A biassed judge art thou, methinks, for whom
Blind will to God's vacated throne succeeds:
Not that thy heart for Man's vast anguish bleeds,
But that thy pride revolts against his doom.

Yet thou hast roused the shallow and the weak
From dreams of bliss to consciousness of woe,
Hast nerved the strong with tenfold zeal to seek
Redemption from the grinding yoke of care,
Or, at the worst, the worst resolve to know,
E'en though the fruit of knowledge be despair.

VIII.—Comte

STEADFAST, unswerving, mind and heart were set,
Concentrate on the beacon of thine aim;
Garnered by thee, in one transmuting flame
The aspirations of the ages met.
Thy purpose welds the plastic nations yet,
Wafted on wings of world-exploring fame;
E'en they who flout thy toil and spurn thy name
Blindly defray their unacknowledged debt.

Dreamer of life ennobled, beautified,
Of Poesy and Worship crowned anew,
The Future—'tis the Future must decide:
What matter whether worldlings bless or ban!
Already art thou, to thy faithful few,
Arch-Pontiff of the Hierarchy of Man!

IX.—Nietzsche

“**S**HOW me your mightiest,” Zarathustra cried,
And Nature, hearkening to the challenge, brought
Heroes and Saviours, Kings of Deed and Thought,
By lesser men for ages deified.
Naked they stood, in majesty and pride
Of manhood, there, who in their day had fought
Sublimely, or with golden utterance taught;
“*Too human!*” frowned the Sage, and turned aside.

Man is a stair, whereby the bestial climbs
Into the godlike, Man the bridge between
The dead past and the unborn future times.
Dark was the night, but dawn succeeds at last,
And in the noontide of that day serene
By Man’s high issue Man shall be surpassed.

Democracy

DEMOCRACY, Democracy,
O word of hope and thrilling power,
O salt wind blowing from the sea
To brace us hour by hour!
We wait thine advent and we dream
Of life renewed and made sublime,
But slowly, slowly mounts thy gleam
Above the hills of Time.

Democracy, Democracy,
From height to height ascend we still
Up the steep rock of Liberty,
Knit by one dauntless will.
One, howsoe'er dispersed in space,
Though severing seas betwixt us roar,
Of alien feature, tongue and race,
Yet one, the wide world o'er!

Democracy, Democracy,
The reign of Justice come at last,
All kings dethroned, all creeds disowned,
All tyrannies downcast!

Man looks into his brother's eyes
And sees the Godhead burning there :
Love is the wisdom of the wise,
And wealth is what we share !

Democracy, Democracy,
No teeming cities thronged with knaves,
No pampered rogues in luxury,
No starved and abject slaves !
Life steeped in sunshine, bathed in air,
Life redolent of earth and sea,
As calmly strenuous and as fair
As growth of grass and tree.

Democracy, Democracy,
Man probes the universal heart,
Unlocks the doors of mystery,
The treasure-house of art.
With patient unremitting skill
He presses onward through the maze
Where Nature leads, revealing still
New wonders to his gaze.

Democracy, Democracy,
Our sordid lives take thou in hand ;
Transmute them to a symphony
Of organ-music grand.
With cleansing fires our souls assay,
Consume the false, confirm the true,
And in the searching light of day
Establish us anew.

Democracy, Democracy,
The hour of triumph is not yet,
And in the flush of victory
Our children may forget
How we, who long have passed away,
With pain and travail gave thee birth,
That so might dawn for them one day
Thy reign upon the earth.

Democracy, Democracy,
We sow, but other hands will reap ;
Grant then at least that we may be
Remembered when we sleep.
O ye, our heirs, in that far time,
Glance back and murmur with a tear :
“ *They toiled for us with hope sublime ;
Ah, would that they were here !* ”

Sonnets

I.—To a Priest

O PRIEST, how shall I learn to speak thy name?
I love thee, yet I love thee not: thou art
A *man*, so shalt be welcome to my heart,
The sacred rights of brotherhood shalt claim.
Thou too canst pale with fear, or glow with shame,
Or shrink like me beneath love's fiery dart;
In all my joys and sorrows thou hast part:
Is not the life that stirs in us the same?

Yet ever present to me is one blot,
Weaning my spirit from thee by degrees,
Thy barren creeds and drear futilities,
Thin echoes of a music long forgot—
I am of them that will have none of these,
So priest, I love thee, yet I love thee not.

II.—Broken Strings : An Adieu

AND so, farewell! the silver chords are rent
Whose music lulled our senses till to-day,
In plaintive echoes dies that music gay,
The hour of sweet oblivion is outspent,
Love flings aside her tuneless instrument,
And thou, poor heart, what need hast thou to stay?
Look, where the reckless god pursues his way,
On some new victim's overthrow intent!

O foolish heart, wilt thou for ever seek
For joy, whence only sorrow can arise,
For ever credulous, for ever weak,
Lured by the glamour of a woman's eyes?
Those wayward glances thus, to warn thee, speak,
"Who looks for truth in us, shall find us—lies!"

III.—Finality

HAVE I loved other women? Be it so!
Not less, but more, my heart is thine to-day :
Thou art to them as beaten gold to clay.
Their radiant gifts were but a foil to show
Thy sweet perfection. I have lived to know
All other passions mortal. Were not they
The stripes that brought me 'neath thy gentler sway,
Whose right supreme Time shall not overthrow.

Take then this guerdon of my love and wear it,
Its virtue shall distil through every path,
Adding to all thy charms one final grace :
Let the rich torrent of thy life-blood bear it
To paint with rosy hues thy fair young face,
And course for ever through thy constant heart.

IV.—Aspiration

I FAINT for breath in this polluted air,
I will arise this very night, and go
Hence through the city, till once more I know
That when God made the earth He made it fair.
Within, my powers do languish, but, out there,
When once I feel the quickening breezes blow,
My pallid cheeks with ruddy life shall glow,
And Nature banish every trace of care.

Eager to reach at once the distant bourne,
I rose and hurried forth, but all in vain!
The echoes mocked me, crying "Fool, return!"
At every step I felt my courage wane,
And rising like a phantom dark and stern
The cruel city thrust me back again.

V.—Reaction

NO matter how we brace ourselves for strife,
With error sanctioned by the foolish throng,
Or sally forth to prove that we are strong
And vow that we have taken truth to wife ;
No matter how when treachery is rife,
We kindle duly with a sense of wrong
Or how attempt the topmost flights of song
That grapples with the mysteries of life.

Still, there are times of retrospect, when all
Our glowing past is rated as a treason
Against the very life of the offender,
When bruised, perhaps, or broken by a fall,
We bow towards the earth, and for a season,
Experience the sweetness of surrender.

Degeneracy

THE bards have been getting a great deal too respectable :
We have almost attained the rank of a learned profession !
Let us have no more poets in black frock coats with a clerical
twang in their voices,
Nor yet, forsooth, in Byronic frenzy, with turned-down collars and
carefully crumpled ties and tresses.
Stalwart fellows are what we want, with love in their hearts and
hatred too, perhaps,
Who will pitch us a sounding stave with the sort of ring in it
That shows when a man means business.

The Poet and the Sea

BEAUTIFUL Sea, although thou carest nought
For my poor love or me,
With godlike calm, with godlike fury fraught,
And smiling mockery,
Yet musing here alone my soul is taught
Her sovereignty,
And pinioned on the fearless fans of thought
Soars heavenward proud and free.

Thou art a singer, sea, thy songs are heard
On many a sounding shore,
Now softer than a woman's whispered word,
Now angry as the roar
Of gods in battle, and men's hearts are stirred
Within them more
By those rude rhapsodies than song of bird
Or sweet poetic lore.

My voice to thine is as the hum of bees
Upon a sultry day
When thunder wakes the stillness and the trees
Tremble before the fray,

Yet thou in thy celestial harmonies
Must still obey
Laws like to them I honour, and by these
And these alone hast sway.

Thou, too, hast bounds assigned thee by the gods
Whence thou canst never go,
Thy voice like mine in rhythmic periods
Must duly ebb and flow,
And thou, O sea, when from their high abodes
The great winds blow,
Art lashed and beaten, as it were with rods,
And hurried to and fro.

Fair secret thoughts within thy bosom dwell
Which, half disdainfully,
In many a lavish weed and sculptured shell
Thou yieldest up to me.
Yet lust and malice lurk therein as well
Abundantly,
And crimes too many and too strange to tell
Pervade thy memory.

Imperious one! although thou carest naught
For my poor love or me,
With godlike calm, with godlike fury fraught,
And smiling mockery,
Yet musing here alone my soul is taught
Supremacy,
And pinioned on the fearless fans of thought
Soars heavenward proud and free.

Smile in the morning, thunder in the night,
And triumph in the day,
Be canopied with darkness, robed with light
And girt with silver spray ;
Shine like a sword in battle, bare and bright
Sing on, be gay,
Yet, ocean, I, not thou, am infinite,
My soul mocks thine for aye !

Excursionists

THESE children, making such a din together,
Have journeyed (God knows whence or why !)
To this of all spots in the universe
To spend some hours beside the summer sea.
Headlong to and fro scamper the sturdiest of them,
Little they reck what weakling falls before them.
One has clutched a coveted cake from his sister,
Well for her if the ruffian's heart relent !
One, who has toiled to garner shells and pebbles,
Buys, not without compunction,
A comrade's apple with his rarest booty.
Some paddle barefoot in the limpid shallows
Or count the sails that speck the blue expanse.
Two tiny lovers after a well-fought quarrel,
Kiss and are friends again ;
And one mild youngster sits apart and sings
A song to which none listens.

Parting

AFTER a long, delightful summer visit,
The day of parting comes—your friend must leave you.
The morning was full of the bustle of preparation,
But that too is over.
Hark! the sound of wheels dies off ; you shut the door in the face
of the sun,
You turn back into the dim, silent hall.
Is this the house that rang with merriment yesterday ?

The Great Noon

I SWEAR to you that the day will surely come
When freedom shall be more than a party cry,
When men shall come and go without let or hindrance,
Shall work when they list, be idle when they will.
My eyes are straining now into the far east,
I look for the dawn, the dawn that shall not fail.

Transmutation

LET my name be to your sight
As a crystal steeped with light,
Let my name be in your ear
Music sweet and shrill and clear.

Ideals

LET me be steadfast! I would clothe with beauty
Dull shapes of earth and unconsidered things,
Or in default of this, my dearest duty,
Be rapt afar with sudden flash of wings.

Glimpses

THE spring is due, yet I to-day have found
The leaves of last year's summer on the ground.

* * * *

I saw a cloudlet intervene
And shut the sunlight from the scene.

* * * *

Windswept clouds, and as they pass
Moving shadows on the grass!

* * * *

The commonest of weeds, and yet
I spare its blossom with regret.

* * * *

A lurking landrail's cries resound,
In baffled search I gaze around.

* * * *

Above that sylvan screen a glow
Announces that the sun is low.

* * * *

Pleasant breeze, blue waters and the sun,
And the trees reflected, one by one.

* * * *

Dusk deepens, through the rain a staring toad
Crawls, hesitating, up the desolate road.

* * * *

Lost in the twinkling of an eye
Beautiful blue butterfly!

* * * *

Confronting my advance one planet shines
Along the road between the whispering pines.

* * * *

The wan canal, the spectral sky,
A few pale stars, the trees and I.

* * * *

Under that grey bridge how blue
Is the limpid water's hue!

* * * *

Yellow moonlight on the stream
Like love-glamour in a dream.

* * * *

Filaments from bough to bough,
Sunbeams glance along them now.

* * * *

Shrivelled leaves at every breath
Flutter to the sward beneath.

* * * *

Phantom-like you cleave the mist,
First and second bicyclist.

* * * *

The air is murky, damp and chill,
A new moon overtops the hill.

* * * *

Nimble fox-terrier, what zest
That roguish glance and mien attest !

* * * *

Faint and fleeting are the rays
Gilding these November days.

* * * *

An echo gives me back again
The whistle of a passing train.

* * * *

The stream is dark against the snow
And ruddy where the moonbeams glow.

The Promised Land

LET us go forth and win the land of Beauty,
The land is fair beyond what words can tell;
There every man shall wed the mystic maiden
Who stole his heart in childhood while he slept.
I will go first, for I have been there often,
No harm can come to him that follows me.

Shelley

SHELLEY the Lucifer of song drew breath,
And Superstition shuddered, sick to death.

Landor

CALM lay the ocean, cloudless was the sky
When lion-hearted Landor passed me by.

Legacies

DELICIOUS names!
Names with perfumes, wine-like names,
The names of dear dead poets!

Songs

I.—Enough for Me

I ASK thee not the priceless boon
Of love that knows not doubt or fear,
That vision faded all too soon
And left me lonely, waiting here.
If in thy heart, by memory wrought,
Of all that I have been to thee,
Lives yet one half-regretful thought,
It is enough—enough for me!

Though thou and I, in bygone years,
To riper passion strangers yet,
Confessed with vows and foolish tears
A love that never could forget,
If there remains one tender thought
That holds my memory dear to thee
'Mid all the changes time hath brought,
It is enough—enough for me.

II.—Emancipation

WHEN love lies down upon the trampled roses,
The love that joined you hand in hand with me,
I'll tend him till his weary lids he closes,
I'll kiss him when he dreamlessly reposes,
I'll kiss him once, and then I'll set you free.

Oh cheat me not, nor tell me that he slumbers,
To waken soon for that will never be,
Love cannot sleep; with heedless haste he numbers
The destined hours, then, dead, the earth encumbers,
We'll bury him and I will set you free.

III.—Autumn Reverie

SHE dreams while Autumn floods the fields with glory,
Her hands are clasped behind her golden head ;
She sings her song of love, the old, old, story,
And listens for the footsteps of the dead.

The merry reapers, reaping in the meadow,
They hear her not, her voice is soft and low ;
They see her not, she lingers in the shadow,
The world is busy with its weal and woe.

The shadows and the leaves are falling, falling,
And dark and cold the river slides along ;
She hears the voices of her loved ones calling,
And homeward turning, answers them with song.

IV.—Love owns no Fetter

LOVE owns no fetter, bolt or bar,
Love conquers Rogue and Saint,
From humblest Orb to brightest Star,
Love wings without restraint.
Where'er bright eyes with rapture meet
Or youthful hearts abound,
Where'er Life's myriad pulses beat,
There Love, sweet Love, is found.

Refrain

All the Realms of Time and Space
Own Love's kingship, own his grace,
Truth's last secret ambushed lies
In the depths of Love's mild eyes.

On Bird and Beast love's mystic spell
With sovereign might is laid,
His charms with equal force compel
Proud Queen and artless Maid.
All worlds to Love's imperial feet
Their tribute gladly bring,
Where'er Life's myriad pulses beat
There Love, great Love, is king.

Love knows no bounds of Time or Space,
 No sadness of decay,
No darkness long conceals his face,
 No barrier stops his way.
Love mocks the shafts of Scorn and Hate,
 Love laughs when kingdoms fall,
For be it soon or be it late,
 Love shall be All in All.

The Seer

POET, rapt, expansive,
Dimly seen at midnight,
Tell me all thy visions!
Many sounding phrases
Uttered he, and vanished.

Nemesis

FLUENT seers and bards with cloud-born visions,
Measured and tinted maps of hell and heaven,
Master-keys to pick the lock of the universe,
It seems to us, in spite of your brilliant guesswork,
That, one by one, the Sphinx will make a meal of you.

Disillusioned

I FELL asleep in a world that was fair throughout,
Blind, blind! but so it seemed to me.
I awake; the film has fallen; I see men as they are,
Hunger-bitten, groping for the light.

The Bargeman

THIS bargeman is the type of contemplation;
He sits astern and steers his dingy vessel
And, passive to the changes of the seasons,
Assimilates the central calm of Nature.

Anatomy

I N this room the young men are dissecting,
Corpses lying naked on the tables,
Some untouched, and some past recognition!
Here, a brain awaits investigation,
Here, a youth, with book and box beside him,
Plies a carefully selected scalpel;
Here, a group surrounds a demonstrator,
Piteously invoked by a clumsy novice;
Like a deft magician he exposes
Branching nerve and vein and silver tendon,
Clears the fat from smoothly-rounded muscle,
Seems to fashion what the blade reveals.
Laughter now and then disturbs the stillness,
Gossip too, proceeds; but, for the most part,
All betokens calm preoccupation.

Repletion

I AM weary of dim romance and futile fiction,
Sick of their shadowy joys and feigned affliction ;
One human face is a pregnant scroll of mystery
That is more to me than the laboured lies of history.

Questionable

AM I to expiate my egotism,
Or to be scarified for scepticism,
Flatly despised for puling pessimism
Or patronised for sentimentalism ?

Culmination

A DYNAMITE bomb, hurled for the Czar of Russia,
Mangles an innocent child.
Confusion! the royal equipage halts. Alighting,
The Emperor, ghastly pale, stoops over the shrieking boy until
he is dead.
The captured criminal brought before him, sneers:
"Too soon to thank God yet!"
A young man starts from the crowd: look! is it a snowball
Striking the earth between him and the Czar?
A flash and a crash! Both fall: the Emperor's legs are shattered.
"It is cold, cold!" he murmurs. "Home! let me die there!"
They huddle him into a sledge: they heap furs over him; now
they are off to the palace.
A trail of blood reddens the snow behind them.

Beacons

YOU that would leave us a life that shall stir the blood like a
bugle call,
Follow the star of Hope wherever it lead you,
And be sure it will lead you out of the beaten track.
But first take heed that your star be a star and not peradventure
a pestilent Jack o'lantern
That will lure you up to your chin in the swamp.

Lucubrations

WHEN I attend the universal Playhouse,
I sometimes doze throughout the exhibition ;
At others, watch the Piece, a good one always !
Which tempts me to impart my new impressions
By writing to Relations in the Country.

The Shooting Star

A METEOR clove the star-lit sky—
“ I flash from solitude, to solitude,
Good-bye! ”

Atlas

O F all the fabulous Immortals
I love and pity most that ruined Rebel
Whose back is bowed by the burden of the Gods.

The Tryst

YES, nightingale, I hear, but I must hasten !
She will not fail to come : I think she loves me,
And love to such as her is a Religion.
How dark, how exquisitely sad her eyes are,
Her voice is like the murmur of the ocean
Which seems to emphasize the summer stillness !
How beautiful the moon looks through the branches !
Will she be dressed in white again, I wonder.
This is the turning—yes, I think I see her,
Strange that my darling does not rise to greet me !
How still she is ! Ah ! what was that she told me ?
“ A weakness of the heart, which might prove fatal ! ”

Insects

A SPARKLING swarm of gnats confronts me,
Now shaken like a flimsy curtain,
Now thrilled by a sudden perturbation,
Now pierced by a predatory swallow.

Revival

O FEVERED world awake refreshed, for now!
Time lays his cool hand on your burning brow!

Aphorisms

TOO much freedom or too little,
Indicates that bonds are brittle.

* * * *

No tortured patient heeds what health require
Oblivion is the sum of his desires.

* * * *

Wisdom's voice may reach your ears,
Once perhaps in many years.

* * * *

Every voice has its true inflection,
Every soul has its due perfection.

* * * *

Lovers of the truth will give
Happiness away, and live.

* * * *

Self assertion and repression,
Are the wheels of smooth progression.

* * * *

Since our very faults grow dear
Love's divinity is clear.

* * * *

Grief embalmed in many tears
May be kept perhaps two years.

* * * *

When he squanders pence, we scold
Him who shared with us his gold.

* * * *

Love may vanish or decay,
Nature never turns away.

* * * *

Living poems all around,
Variously wrought and bound.

* * * *

A miracle without a flaw
Is the unity of law.

* * * *

All creeds and all philosophies
Are masquerading verities.

* * * *

For your inmost heart's desire
Venture famine, flood, and fire.

* * * *

Each particle implies
The scheme it qualifies.

* * * *

Learn thy weakness, for at length
It must be thy source of strength.

* * * *

The certainty of death remains
To reconcile us with our pains.

* * * *

The dignity of nakedness
Reveals the turpitude of dress.

* * * *

Nothing is yours, not even your own life,
All things are yours, even your neighbour's wife.

* * * *

Friends of equity a token,
Only unjust laws are broken!

* * * *

The poet who is glad, contrives
To reconcile two jealous wives.

* * * *

To-morrow never comes, we say,
To-morrow does come every day.

* * * *

Excess of love, excess of hate,
Are qualities that celebrate.

* * * *

Fame with her diadem endows
The nobler not the noblest brows.

* * * *

Be it injury or gain
What you ask you shall obtain.

* * * *

To worship truly is to stand
Already in the promised land.

* * * *

Love has wings, yet often passes
On his feet through meadow grasses.

* * * *

Concealment emphasises,
Exposure harmonises.

* * * *

In Poesy like other things,
The world has had enough of kings.

* * * *

You will find life when you travel
Still the same coil to unravel.

* * * *

In time dark depths of limpid pools are seen,
Foul puddles thwart the gaze, though long and keen.

* * * *

Slowly dawns the day of our perfection,
Love's renewal, Reason's resurrection.

* * * *

Beauty draped is beauty overdressed,
What is good is what is unexpressed.

* * * *

What dignity a poet claims,
Affords an index to his aims.

* * * *

Like twin panthers in a tether,
Envy and malice walk together.

* * * *

The object of our strife
Is harmony in life.

* * * *

Some fine retrospective morrow
You may gloat upon your sorrow.

* * * *

Be sure that something ails the brain
Where childish prattle causes pain.

* * * *

To the palate of mistrust
Life communicates disgust.

* * * *

Prose and poetry contend
For the goal whereat they blend.

* * * *

Of creeds credulity is born,
Faith looks them through with gentle scorn.

* * * *

Little profit in our preaching,
Nature teems with truer teaching!

* * * *

Love, the monitor, is dead,
Lust, the tyrant, reigns instead.

* * * *

You that would bear the globe upon your back,
Take heed you never stumble in your track.

* * * *

In frost or sun the poet blooms,
He withers in your gas-lit rooms.

* * * *

To see the best is to be the best,
And to be the best is to see the best.

* * * *

Shut your mouth and open your eyes, and you shall
be a poet,
Shut your eyes and open your mouth, and all the world
shall know it.

Ad Christum

MYSTERIOUS figure, looming through the ages,
Type of the myriad martyrdoms of Man,
Despair of reason, master-sphinx of sages,
Bright star that shinest ever in the van!
Oh, from thy sunlit pinnacle descending
Amongst us where we strive and languish now,
Behold our sorrow and our toil unending
And say what thinkest thou!

Thy name become the badge of crimes gigantic,
Thy word the countersign of battling creeds;
No rage too cruel, no decree too frantic
To boast thy sanction for their lawless deeds!
To us it seems that these who hail thee Master,
Set thorns new-plaited on thy regal brow,
Invoking benediction on disaster;
But say what thinkest thou!

We who acclaim thy pure impassioned spirit,
Who pierce the semblance, grasp the core of things,
We too the contumely and scorn inherit,
The laugh that blisters and the gibe that clings,
We too, though not of those who throng thine altars,
Or to the symbol of thy godhead bow,
Our Faith possess, which neither swerves nor falters,
Whereof what thinkest thou?

The fresh and fragrant beauty of the morning,
As Nature's flawless gift our heart receives,
And innocent for us of guile or warning
The wistful afterglow of summer eves ;
Holier the lovelit eyes of wife or mother
Than cloistral solitude or priestly vow,
For joy, we deem, in this world or another,
Is joy—what thinkest thou ?

Yet we revere the purpose high and holy
Serenely shining in thy steadfast eyes,
The splendour of thy matchless melancholy,
The depth and passion of thy calm replies.
In stern rebuke or grave remonstrance, truly
Majestic thy demeanour, we avow ;
What wonder if the froward and unruly
Abashed before thee bow ?

What wonder that, when Death with grand completeness
Had sealed thy life and labour, there arose
A cry of awed remembrance of their sweetness
Piercing the flinty bosoms of thy foes !
If in the light of Love's transfiguration
They who had scourged and spat upon thee, now
Acclaimed thee Lord and Master of creation,
What wonder, thinkest thou ?

But we, who in the cold noontide of Reason,
The poignant picture steadfastly survey,
Who scourged thee not, need expiate no treason,
Would sweep these clouds of mystery away,

Would see thee in thy simple human fashion
Walking the sunlit fields of Galilee,
Dispensing words of wisdom and compassion,
Or musing by the sea.

We may not, for the genius of thy nation,
Moved by an impulse plastic and sublime,
Has throned thee in a proud celestial station
Beyond the boundaries of space and time.
And hopeless were the task to disentangle
The human from the Virgin-born to-day:
When raging sectaries dispute and wrangle,
We smile and turn away.

Not therefore in Humanity's Pantheon
Of saints and heroes, dear to every heart,
We shrine thee, but from æon unto æon
Thou dwellest on Olympian heights apart
With Hercules, Prometheus and Gautama,
Whose forms, like thine, with godhead we endow,
Protagonists of one stupendous drama!
And yet—what thinkest thou?

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